GARDEN PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

COLOUR *BURST*

Late and lovely chrysanthemums

The best trees *for growing in pots*

Top 10 plants

Head gardener's picks for seasonal interest

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Chelsea winner Charlotte Harris on how to design green and gorgeous gardens

Autumn gardens

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Welcome

JOHN CAMPBELL

Autumn has arrived with its rich tapestry of colours and textures, and we celebrate the season in style this issue, with three beautiful gardens that take full advantage of this special time of year.

Karin Winkler's naturalistic country garden is the culmination of years of joyful planting and tending, a personal oasis that speaks to her passion and dedication (page 30). There's a tiny urban garden designed by Stefano Marinaz, who has transformed a small city plot into a mini woodland grove, with nine trees and exquisite design details (page 48). And for something completely different, we visit Little Island in New York, the arresting new park on the Hudson designed by Heatherwick Studio and planted by MNLA (page 62).

Award-winning landscape designer Charlotte Harris continues her new design solutions series with advice on how to create sustainable and stylish spaces (page 92), and Rebecca McMackin asks if doing less gardening might do more for biodiversity, in an effort to get people to leave the leaves alone (page 114).

There are lots of plants to enjoy too, with head gardener Andrea Brunsendorf's top ten plants for November (page 14), the best chrysanthemums to grow to keep the colour going into winter (page 72), expert picks of trees to grow in pots (page 40), and designer Jo Thompson's final instalment of her container planting series, with a last flourish of stylish displays that will see your garden through the colder months (page 56).

Stephanie Mahon

STEPHANIE MAHON, EDITOR

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Watch Troy Scott Smith's expert advice on how to do the 'chop and drop' garden method. Scan the QR code or go to **gardensillustrated.com/chop-drop**

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Facebook @gardensillustrated

The dramatic architecture of Little Island in New York's Hudson River is matched by its exciting planting, page 62.

NGOC MINH NGO

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NOVEMBER 2024

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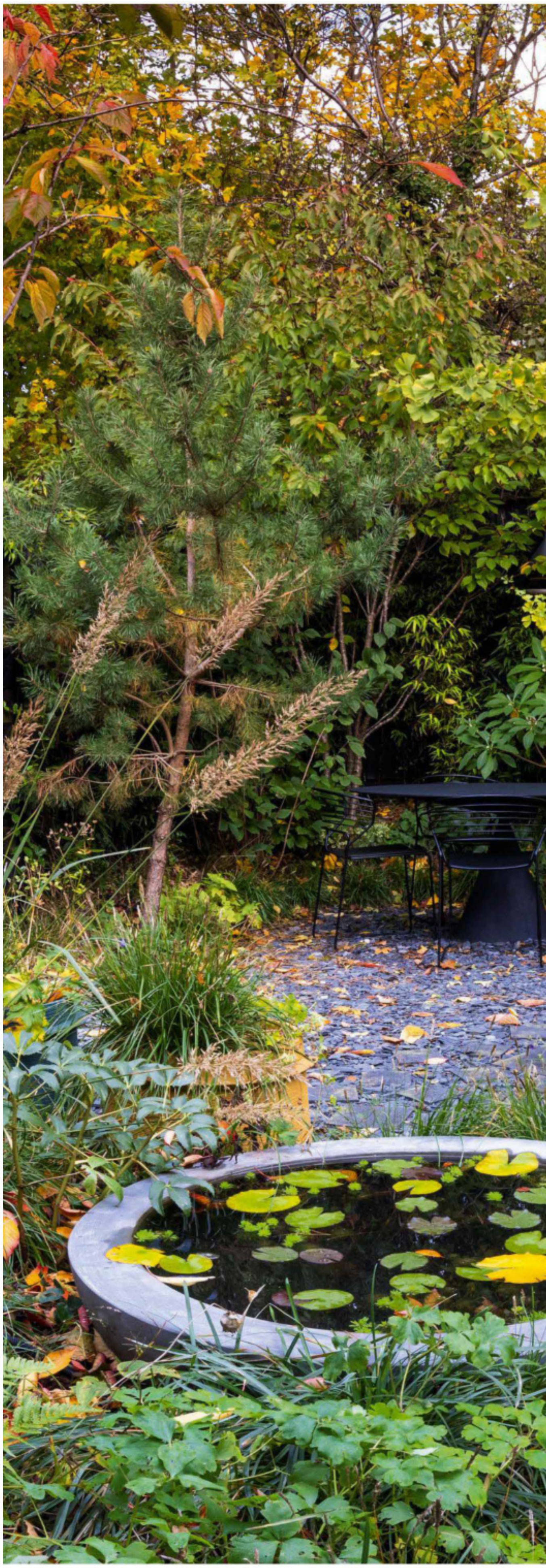

RICHARD BLOOM

Designer Stefano Marinaz has used nine trees and textured planting to transform a small London garden into a woodland-style sanctuary, page 48.

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SEE PAGE 20

COVER IMAGE

Chrysanthemum 'Sweetheart Pink'. Photograph by Clive Nichols (page 72).

ON THE COVER

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Best trees for pots, page 40
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EVENTS AND OFFERS

- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* * – page 20

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Contributors

Robert Mabic

Robert photographs a naturalistic German garden, page 30. "*The result of knowledge, work and love, this garden blends beautifully into the landscape with rich colours and texture.*"

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Humaira Ikram

Humaira visits a new park in New York, page 62. "*I was eager to see Little Island in all its glory and I wasn't disappointed. Textural and believable planting and all the drama of the terrain.*"

Richard Claxton

Richard examines the effects of gardening on the brain, page 80. "*It's wonderful to write about a treatment – both preventative and rehabilitative – with so many beneficial side effects.*"

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CHRISTA HOLKA

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Charlotte Harris

Charlotte co-founded the values-driven landscape design practice Harris Bugg Studio with Hugo Bugg in 2017. She has won three Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, as well as Best Show Garden in 2023.

Fergus Garrett

Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993 and is now CEO of the garden's Charitable Trust. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

James Basson

James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design, a practice for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best Show Garden in 2017.

Anna Pavord

Anna was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent for 30 years and is the author of the bestselling book *The Tulip*. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson

Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers. Among his many award-winning gardens is the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan. He was awarded an OBE in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to horticulture.

Sarah Price

Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012, 2018 and 2023, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

Design: Kate Mackay Roberts

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Design: Harry Holding

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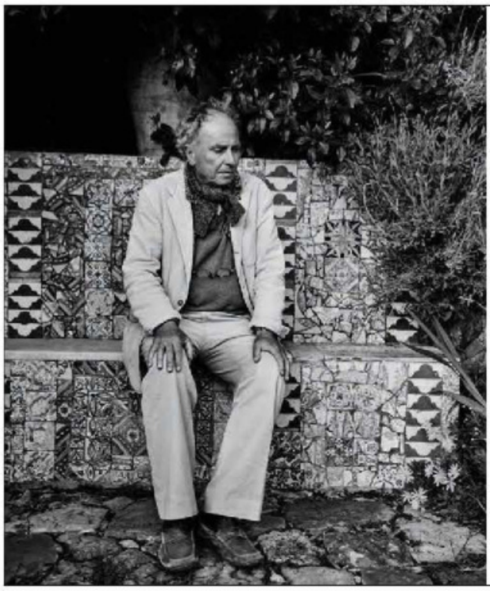
DIG IN

What's new, what's growing and what's going on this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **MOLLY BLAIR**

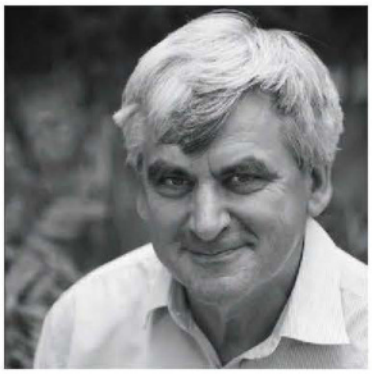


GARDEN BOOK

PASTORAL CARE

In his latest book, award-winning photographer Andrew Montgomery, whose work is frequently seen in the pages of this magazine, has turned his lens on some of the world's most beautiful, nature-led gardens to explore the idea of the pastoral. With text from former *Gardens Illustrated* editor Clare Foster, *Pastoral Gardens* looks at 20 different gardens, from designer Peter Janke's ecological garden in Germany (top) to the Moroccan hillside garden where Italian novelist Umberto Pasti has saved numerous native plants from extinction (above) and the painterly private garden of designer Sarah Price near Abergavenny. Including essays from leading designers Jinny Blom, Nigel Dunnett, Kim Wilkie and Tom Stuart-Smith, the book is a celebration of the beauty of wild landscape, and shows how we can all harness nature in our own gardens. *Pastoral Gardens* is published by Montgomery Press and costs £55. **montgomerypress.co.uk**

ANDREW MONTGOMERY



ADRIAN WHITE

CAN PLANTS BUST MOULD?

If you've recently gone online to find a solution to the problem of mould in your home, you will almost certainly have come across sites suggesting various houseplants, including ivy, Boston ferns, spider plants and orchids, can help banish it. If they cite any evidence at all, most of these online articles argue that houseplants absorb moisture through their leaves and can therefore be placed in damp or humid rooms to prevent mouldy patches appearing.

But is there any truth to these claims? Can plants really absorb moisture from damp rooms? "It would save a lot of watering were it true," said Guy Barter (above), chief horticulturist at the RHS. "I am not so sure how plants can beat mould. Houseplants emit water vapour during transpiration, an unavoidable part of photosynthesis, necessary for the plant's existence. This will contribute in a very small way to condensation in houses. I doubt they can avoid this contribution."

Guy also pointed out that most domestic condensation comes from washing, cooking and people breathing, and added: "I very much doubt that plants emit any chemicals that suppress mould. On the whole, plants, and perhaps more importantly the organisms on the potting compost, absorb modest amounts of indoor pollutants, but not enough to significantly clean the air in most cases."

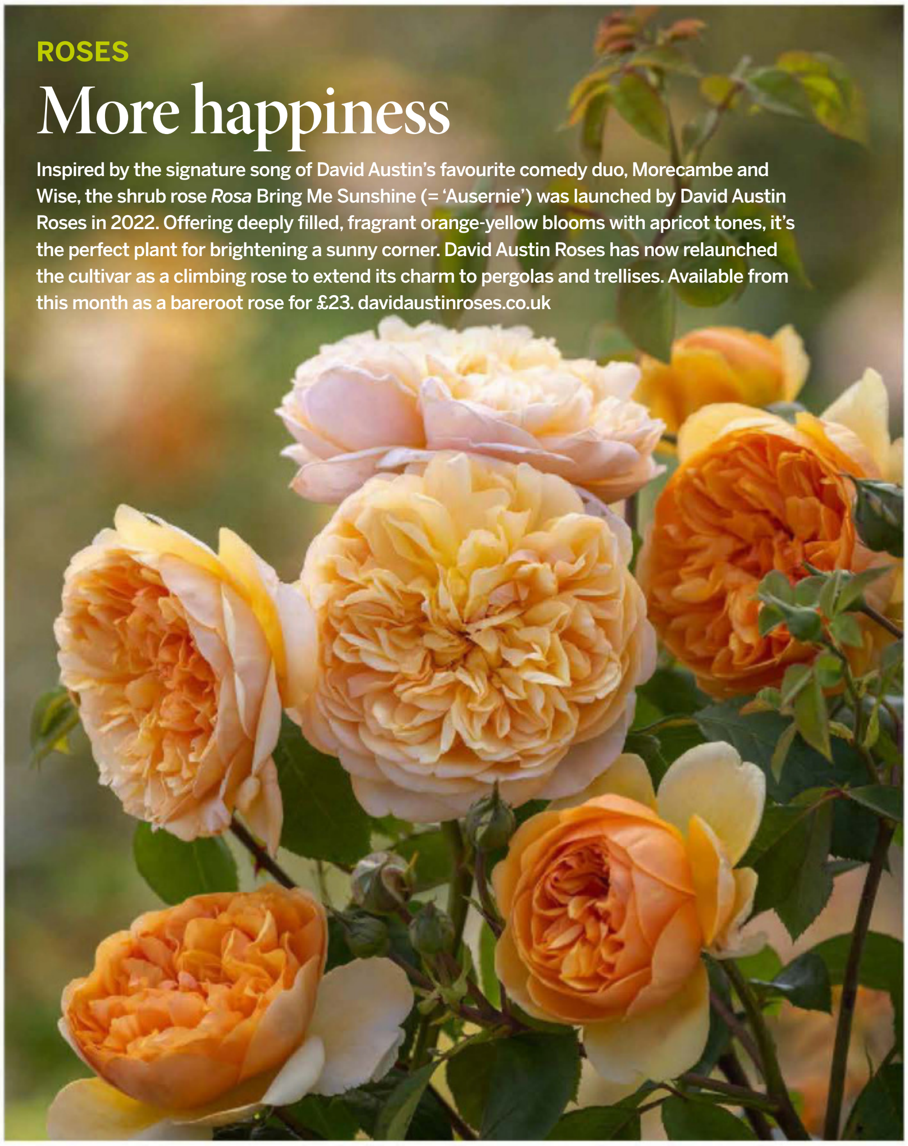
Houseplants may have myriad benefits from lifting our mood to increasing our productivity – and make a gorgeous addition to any room – but beating mould doesn't seem to be one of them. Good insulation, heating and ventilation remain the most effective ways to control excess humidity, condensation and mould.

To find out more about houseplants and mould, scan the QR code or visit **gardensillustrated.com/mould**

ROSES

More happiness

Inspired by the signature song of David Austin's favourite comedy duo, Morecambe and Wise, the shrub rose *Rosa* Bring Me Sunshine (= 'Ausernie') was launched by David Austin Roses in 2022. Offering deeply filled, fragrant orange-yellow blooms with apricot tones, it's the perfect plant for brightening a sunny corner. David Austin Roses has now relaunched the cultivar as a climbing rose to extend its charm to pergolas and trellises. Available from this month as a bareroot rose for £23. davidaustinroses.co.uk



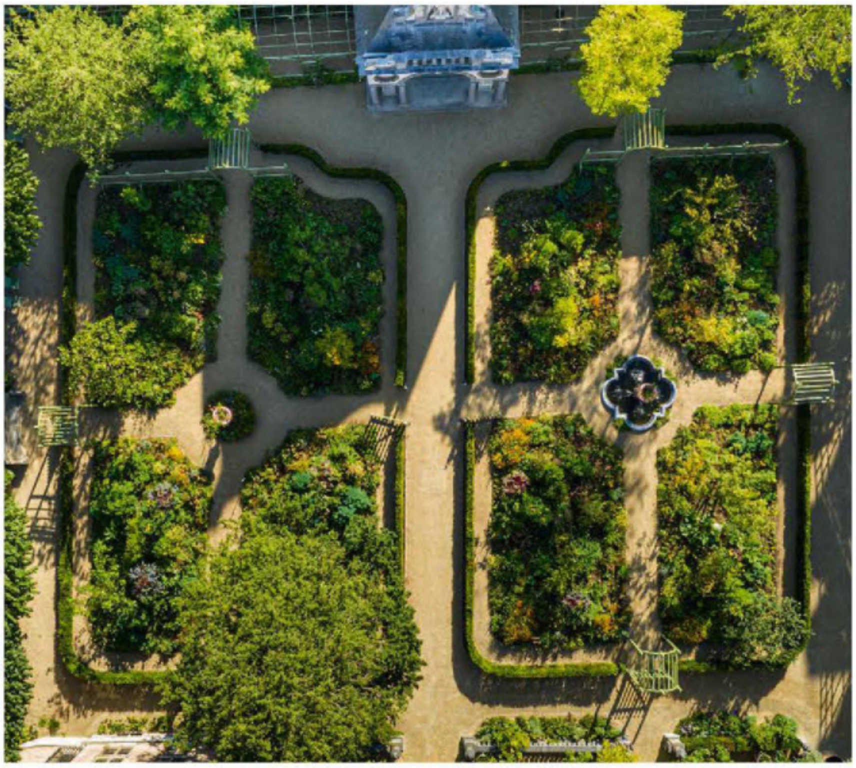
JONATHAN BUCKLEY / DAVID AUSTIN ROSES

DESIGN

ALL CHANGE AT HAMPTON

Award-winning garden designer Ann-Marie Powell is redesigning the Great Fountain Garden at Hampton Court Palace with a focus on sustainability, climate resilience and biodiversity. Originally laid out for monarchs William and Mary between 1689 and 1696, the garden has seen many changes, and the new scheme aims to honour this rich history and safeguard it for future generations. Working alongside the Historic Royal Palace's gardening team, a new scheme will be planted incorporating more perennials, naturalised bulbs and shrubs, creating year-round vibrant displays. Find out more at **hrp.org.uk**

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES



JEAN-PIERRE GABRIEL

OUT & ABOUT

Modern master

Visitors to Antwerp's Rubenshuis museum, once home to the 17th-century Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens, can now see its gardens as they might have looked during the artist's lifetime. Taking inspiration from Rubens' paintings of his garden, a team at the museum scoured historic sources to imagine a new layout for the garden consisting of two quartered parterres, a huge arbour and gates that support roses and assorted climbers. Brought to life by landscape architects Ars Horti, the new garden features a rich mix of 175,000 plants, including bulbs, perennials, shrubs and trees, such as figs that Rubens is known to have grown, to provide interest across the seasons in a colour palette designed in collaboration with Belgian fashion designer Dries Van Noten. You can discover more about the garden and its restoration in *The Rubens Garden: A Masterpiece in Bloom* (Hannibal Books, £22.50) by Klara Alen (the Rubenshuis's research curator), now available in an English translation. **rubenshuis.be**

KNOLL GARDENS

PLANTS

NEW GRASSES

Ornamental grasses specialist Knoll Gardens, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary, has released two new plants. *Pennisetum* 'Black Arrow' (£12.99 for a 2L pot) was selected from a *Pennisetum alopecuroides* seedling and boasts heads of large, cylindrical fluffy flowers that are dark in colour and taper into an arrow-like tip. The plants flower profusely from mounds of bright green foliage. The nursery's other new release, *Miscanthus* 'Sunset' (£13.99 for 2L pot) has 1.8m stems with gently drooping flowers in various shades of soft pink, which are light and airy. The silver-ribbed green foliage gradually fades to a dramatic mix of oranges and reds as autumn draws to a close. **knollgardens.co.uk**

What to do this month

DEBORAH GRACE / CREATE ACADAMY

14 NOVEMBER

Inside & Out Join Create Academy's talk with garden designer Butter Wakefield and interior designer Rita Konig at Thyme. 5.45-7.45pm. £20. Thyme, Southrop Manor Estate, Gloucestershire GL7 3NX. Tel 01367 85017, **thyme.co.uk**

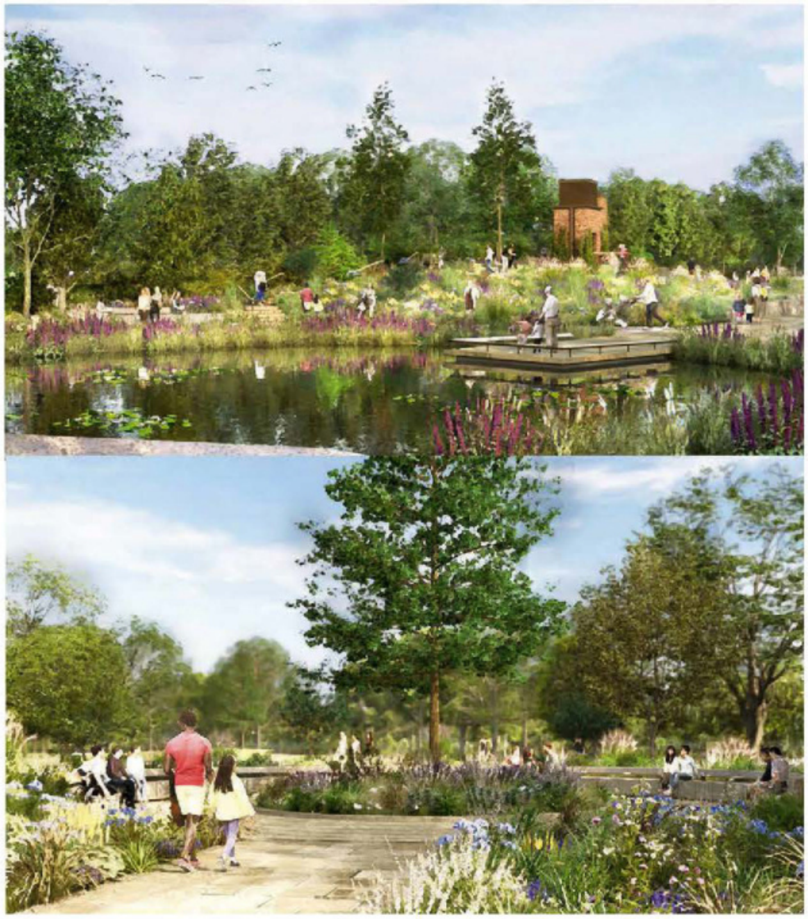
16 NOVEMBER

Christmas Card and Bauble Painting Workshop Get festive with this Christmas craft workshop. 10am-12pm. £60. Pod & Pip, Ebble House, Stratford Tony, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 4AT. Tel 07766 775869, **podandpip.co.uk**

FERGUS GARRETT

18 NOVEMBER

Succession planting Join head gardener Fergus Garrett for this one-day masterclass on creating a long-season border. 10am-4pm. £180. Great Dixter House & Gardens, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. Tel 01797 253107, **greatdixter.co.uk**

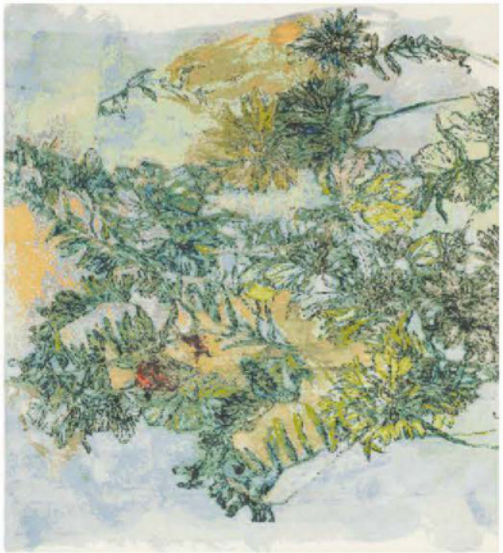


HTA DESIGN

DESIGN

Fit for a queen

Planning permission has now been granted for a new garden to commemorate the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II within The Regent's Park in London. Designed by landscape architects HTA Design, in collaboration with horticulturist Noel Kingsbury and architects Tate+Co, the two-acre garden will feature a circular pond, a central promenade with an accessible platform created from an old water tower, and a vibrant flower garden. Many of the plants have been chosen to reflect Queen Elizabeth II's life, including *Narcissus* 'Diamond Jubilee' and *Tulipa* 'Royal Celebration', as well as some of her favourite plants, including lily-of-the-valley. The new garden is set to open in 2026. For more information, visit **royalparks.org.uk**



AARON MARCUS SUTTON

PRODUCT

FLORAL FLAIR

Luxury rug supplier Knots Rugs has joined forces with Charlotte Gaunt of Rediscovered By to offer five gorgeous floral designs, based on original artworks by Charlotte, who specialises in historical textile techniques. Inspired by flowers she gathers at Keythorpe Hall near her studio in Leicestershire, Charlotte's delicate designs, including the Carnelians & Lupin Seeds rug (above), feature a range of plants, such as sweet peas, nigellas, cornflowers and delphiniums, now recreated using hand-dyed Tibetan wool and Chinese silk. Prices start at £1,750 per square metre. **knotsrugs.co.uk**

3 FOR THE GARDEN…

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BATTERY POWERED
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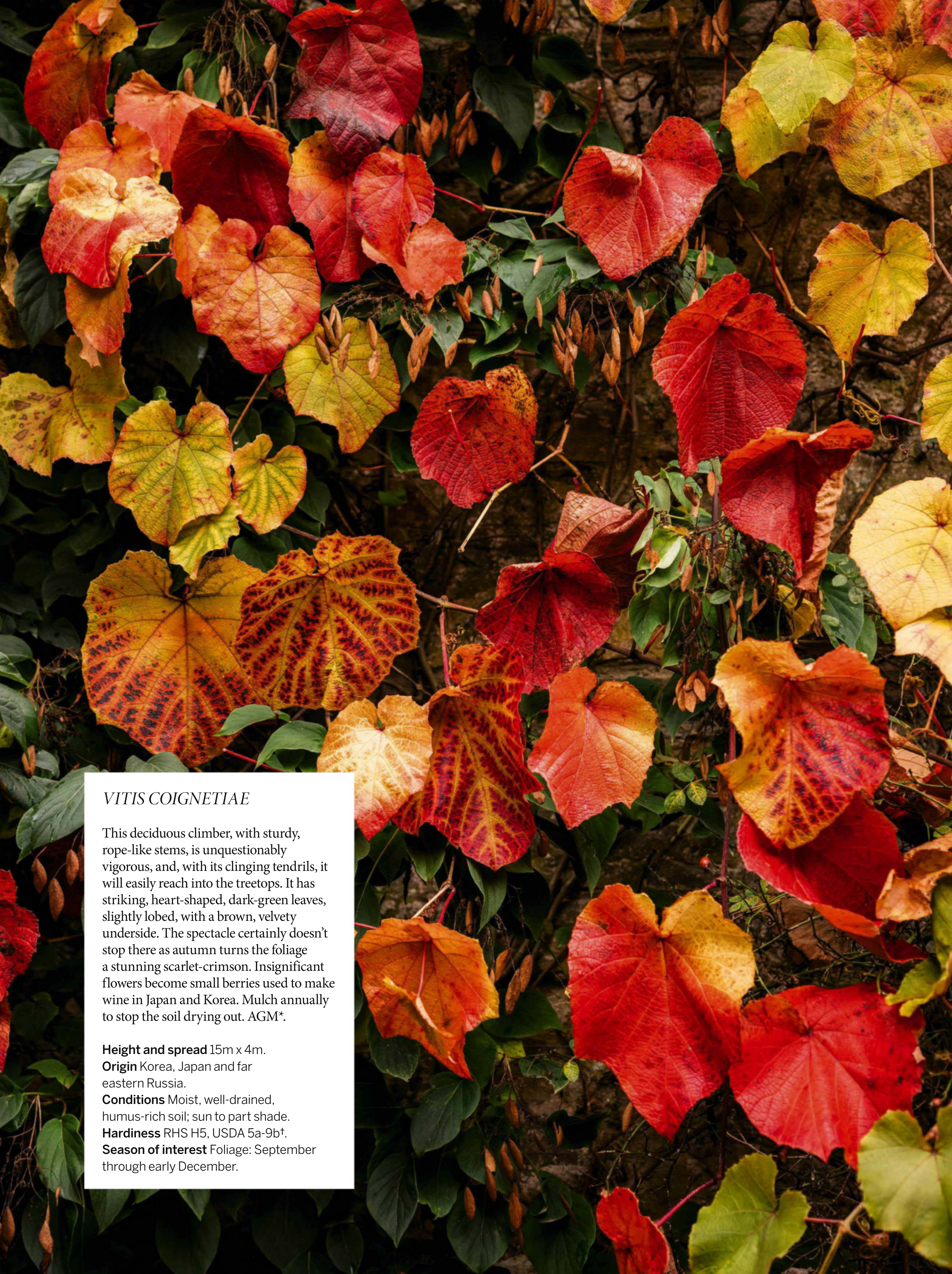


VITIS COIGNETIAE

This deciduous climber, with sturdy, rope-like stems, is unquestionably vigorous, and, with its clinging tendrils, it will easily reach into the treetops. It has striking, heart-shaped, dark-green leaves, slightly lobed, with a brown, velvety underside. The spectacle certainly doesn't stop there as autumn turns the foliage a stunning scarlet-crimson. Insignificant flowers become small berries used to make wine in Japan and Korea. Mulch annually to stop the soil drying out. AGM*.

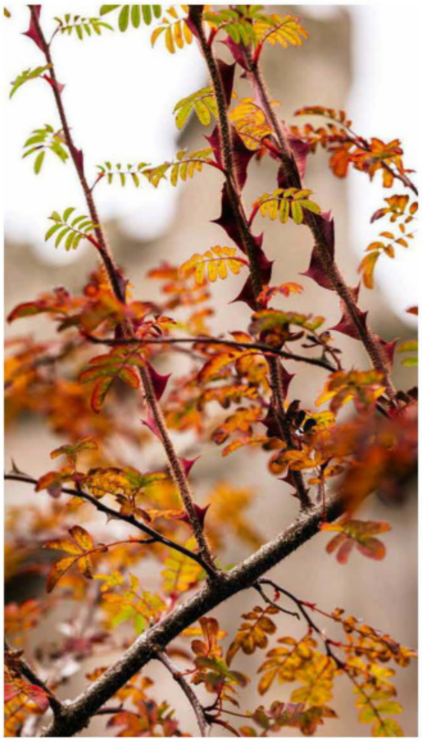
Height and spread 15m x 4m.
Origin Korea, Japan and far eastern Russia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil; sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b†.
Season of interest Foliage: September through early December.

Andrea Brunsendorf is head gardener at Lowther Castle & Gardens in Cumbria **lowthercastle.org**

November plants

Fiery foliage, bright berries, tactile grasses and soft, luxurious seedheads are among the late autumnal highlights for head gardener **Andrea Brunsendorf**

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MAYBURY



ROSA SERICEA SUBSP. *OMEIENSIS* F. *PTERACANTHA*

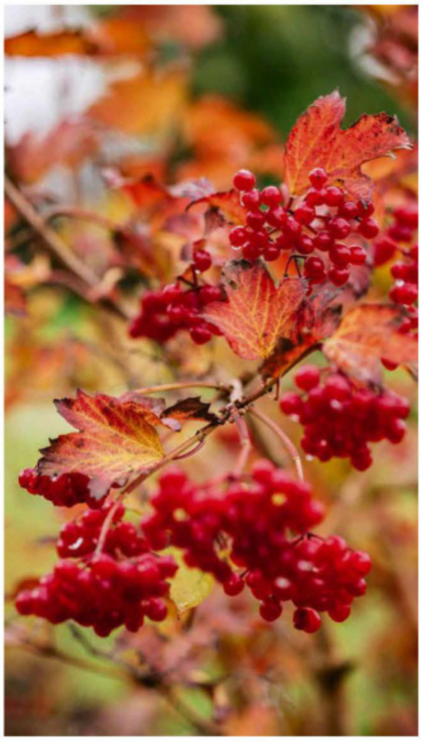
A rarely seen upright species, furnished with translucent, crimson, winged thorns, which are at their most brilliant on new stems. It is a botanical wonder when backlit by early or evening light. It has simple, creamy-white flowers with dominant yellow stamens, followed by small orange-red hips. The delicate, fern-like leaves are bright green, another attractive attribute. Go lightly when pruning; stick to removing dead branches.

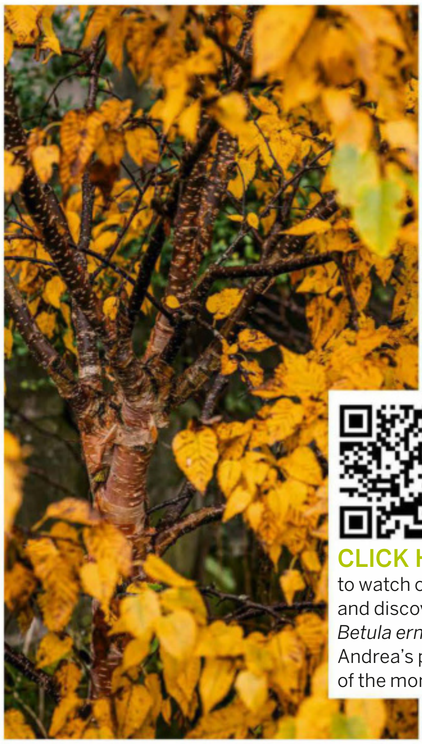
Height and spread 4m x 2.5m.
Origin Western China.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. Tolerates poor soil and shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Flowers: May – June; hips: September – January and attractive thorns year round.

VIBURNUM OPULUS

This rounded deciduous shrub features creamy-white, lacecap-type flowers that turn into eye-catching clusters of translucent red berries, which often linger into the winter. The berries are technically edible, but bitter, so best left for the birds. The dark-green, palmately lobed foliage takes on a captivating yellow-orange to red tint in the autumn. This flamboyant native is an indicator species for ancient woodland and offers multiple seasons of interest, making it a great addition to any garden.

Height and spread 5m x 4m.
Origin Europe, including UK, Asia and northwest Africa.
Conditions Moist, well-draining soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Flowers: April – June; fruit: late August – December; autumn foliage: late September – early November.





CLICK HERE to watch our video, and discover why *Betula ermanii* is Andrea's plant of the month.

BETULA ERMANII 'MOUNT ZAO PURPLE'

This medium-sized, shallow-rooted birch has an elegant habit, with an open, deciduous crown. Sometimes multi-stemmed, the trunk has a beautiful creamy-pinkish bark, which comes off in large papery sheets. Its branches are covered in orange-brown papery bark, and it has conspicuous yellow-brown male catkins in spring. The heart-shaped leaves are coarsely toothed and turn the brightest yellow in autumn, uplifting the entire castle ruin here, especially on wet days.

Height and spread 8m x 4m.
Origin Korea, Japan, Siberia.
Conditions Moist, well-drained soil; sun to part shade. Tolerates poor soils.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Foliage: mid-October – November; bark for winter interest; catkins March – April.

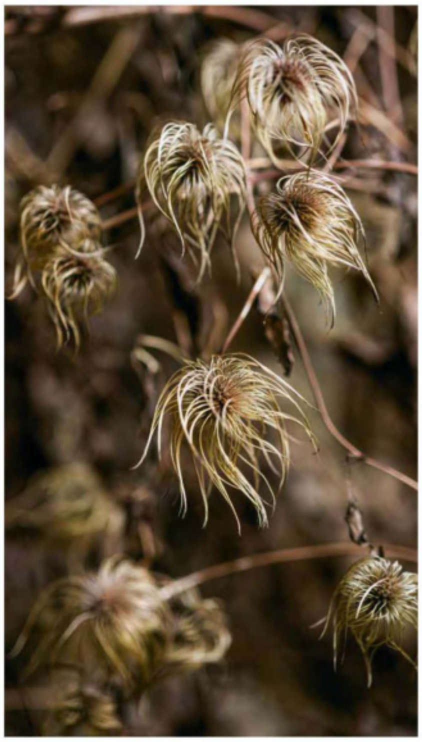
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

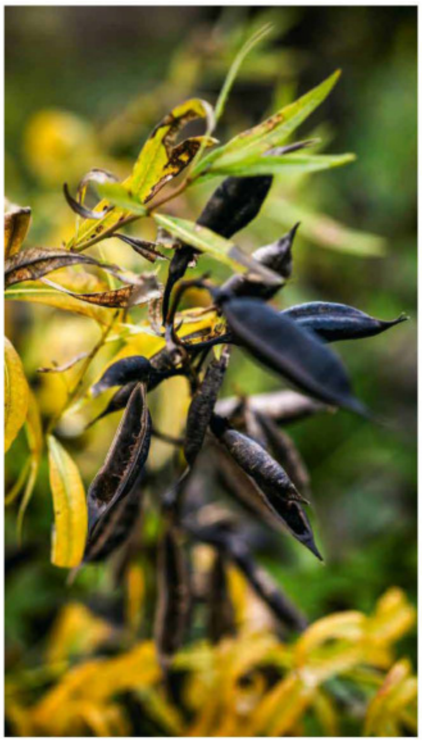
Attractive seedheads turn from white fluffy pompoms to silvery-white, papery stars that glitter in the winter sunshine on Lowther's parterre

CLEMATIS 'BILL MACKENZIE'

A vigorous deciduous climber that provides excellent architectural height and looks good almost all year. In summer it sparkles with bell-shaped, yellow flowers; from early autumn its silvery seedheads light up the walls of the Lowther Castle ruins. It blooms on the current year's growth and belongs to Pruning Group 3, meaning prune hard in late winter. But, if you have the space, it's better not to cut it back hard, preferably not at all; the vertical thicket is a valuable wildlife habitat. AGM.

Height and spread 8m x 4m.
Origin Garden, bred from *C. orientalis* (species central Asia, China).
Conditions Moist but well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. Keep roots cool.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Flowers: July – September; seedheads from September.





BAPTISIA AUSTRALIS

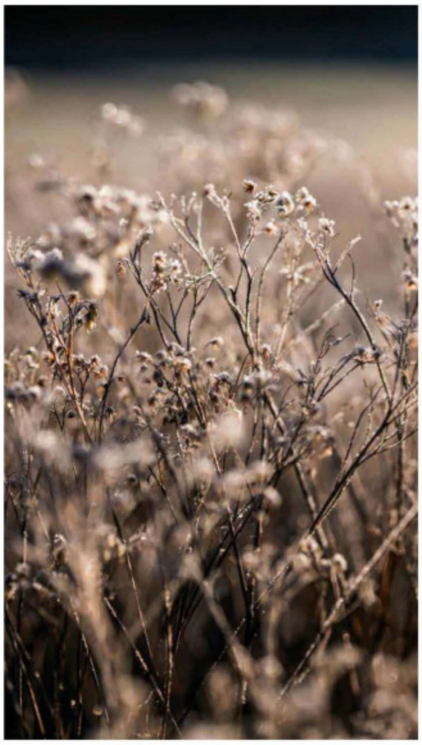
This herbaceous perennial forms impressive bluish-green mounds of trifoliate foliage, emerging from a deep and extensive root system. The lupin-like spikes with indigo-blue pea flowers stand well above the leaves, attracting pollinators in summer and producing attractive, inflated seedpods that turn black when ripe. The overall winter structure of the false indigo catches the attention of visitors to the Tapestry Parterre in winter. Best grown from seed, it takes several years to establish. AGM.

Height and spread 1.5m x 1m.
Origin Eastern USA.
Conditions Dry to moist, well-drained soil in full sun. Tolerates drought and poor soil.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Flowers: May – July; seedpods from September onwards; plant structure remains through winter.

DOELLINGERIA UMBELLATA

A perennial with stiff, upright stems and lance-shaped, rough leaves. In late summer it produces flat-topped heads covered in tiny, yellow-eyed, white daisy-like flowers, which make good cut flowers. Later, attractive seedheads turn from white fluffy pompoms to silvery-white, papery stars that glitter in the winter sunshine on Lowther's parterre. It has excellent mildew resistance. An ideal choice for naturalistic planting, but it spreads, so be prepared to divide it every three to five years.

Height and spread 1.5m x 1m.
Origin Eastern North America.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil; full sun to part shade. Tolerates periods of drought.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Flowers: August – September; seedheads from October.



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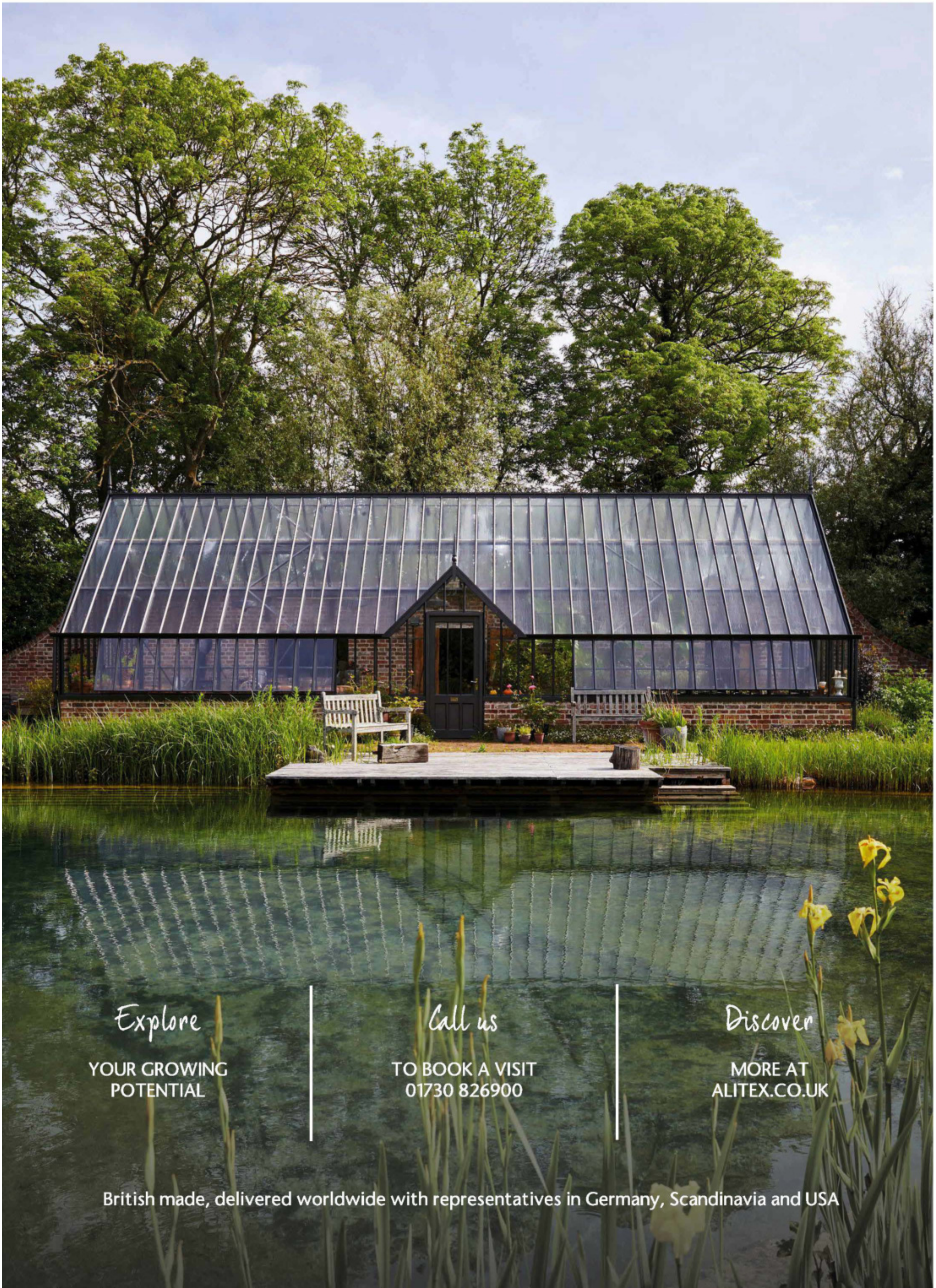
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> I've always had a deep appreciation for upright switchgrasses, and adore this cultivar for its rusty red tones that add beauty to the latter part of the season

HAKONECHLOA MACRA

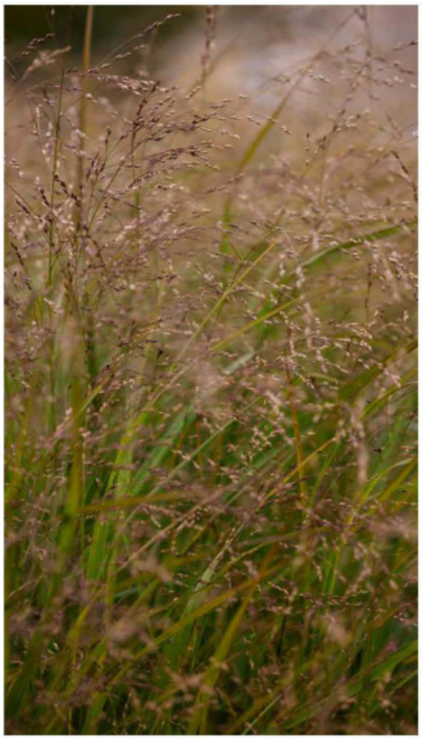
A deciduous grass with graceful arching stems that create a cascading effect. Narrow, bright-green leaves emerge from a perennial rhizome, carrying airy sprays of green flowers. Then at the end of the season, it exhales rich, bronzy tints. Ideal for edges in dappled shade or planted en masse. I've planted it exclusively under large walnut trees, as it tolerates the chemical warfare these trees engage in to suppress competition from their own offspring. I love it, but unfortunately rabbits do too. AGM.

Height and spread 50cm x 50cm.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich sois; sun to shade, but in sun might need supplementary watering to establish.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Year round.

CRYPTOMERIA JAPONICA

Vigorous evergreen tree with a pyramidical habit that becomes broader with age, and attractive, distinctly shredding red-brown bark. The dense, dark-green foliage is made of sickle-shaped leaves, spirally arranged like scales around thin twigs. The round cones, up to 2cm in diameter, appear in autumn at the end of branchlets, first green then turning brown, and are valuable for wreaths and garlands. Young trees might need some winter protection from drying winds. It is one of my favourite conifers besides pines.

Height and spread 20m x 10m.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Moist, well-drained, humus-rich, preferably slightly acidic, soil; full sun, tolerates part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Foliage, cones and bark throughout autumn and winter.



PANICUM VIRGATUM 'REHBRAUN'

I've always had a deep appreciation for upright switchgrasses, and adore this particular cultivar for its rusty red tones that add beauty to the latter part of the season. Its slender, linear leaves change from mid-green to a stunning autumnal display, with weeping clusters of purple, grain-like inflorescences. To keep it vigorous, lift and divide every three to four years. It is a warm-season grower, so I am cautious about growing it in northwest England, as it may not perform here in cool summers.

Height and spread 1.8m x 1m.
Origin Garden (species North America).
Conditions Moist to wet, moderately fertile soils; sun to part shade. Tolerates occasional flooding.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest August – December.

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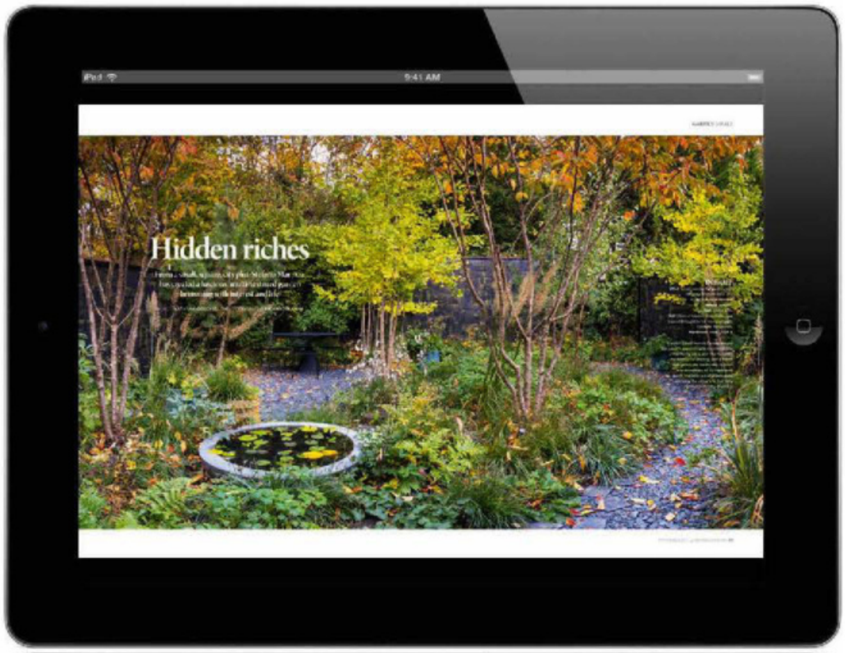
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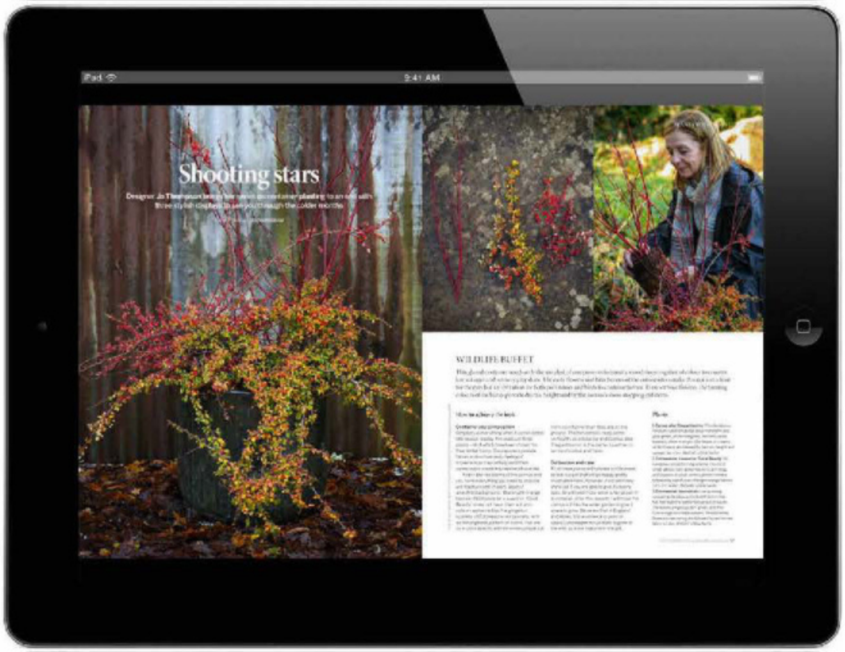
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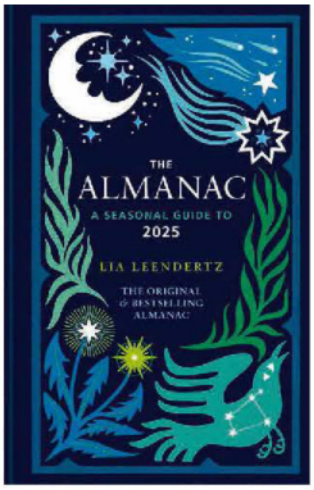
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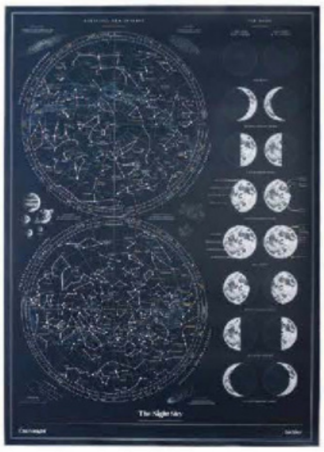

1. Pentax 61813 Binoculars UD 9x21, green, £59, amazon.co.uk **2.** ***The Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to 2025*** **by Lia Leendertz,** £12.99, waterstones.com **3. Stellarscope Star Finder,** £35, shop.rnli.org **4. GeoDomeX Garden Pod,** £1,997, 020 3886 1874, geodomex.co.uk **5. Chartologist Night Sky Scratch Poster,** £15.51, 0121 224 7728, redcandy.co.uk **6. Acne Studios logo-patch check knit scarf,** jade green/yellow, £260, 0800 123 400, selfridges.com **7. FloraBrite Yellow Bypass Secateurs,** with fluorescent handles, £23.49, 0114 233 8262, burgonandball.com **8. Bolleke spherical lamp,** wave blue, £89, fatboy.com **9. Cove Renee Wrist Warmers,** grey with indigo and neon yellow, wool and cashmere, £35, rockthejumpsuit.com

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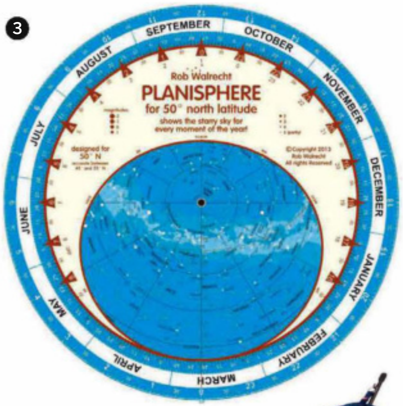
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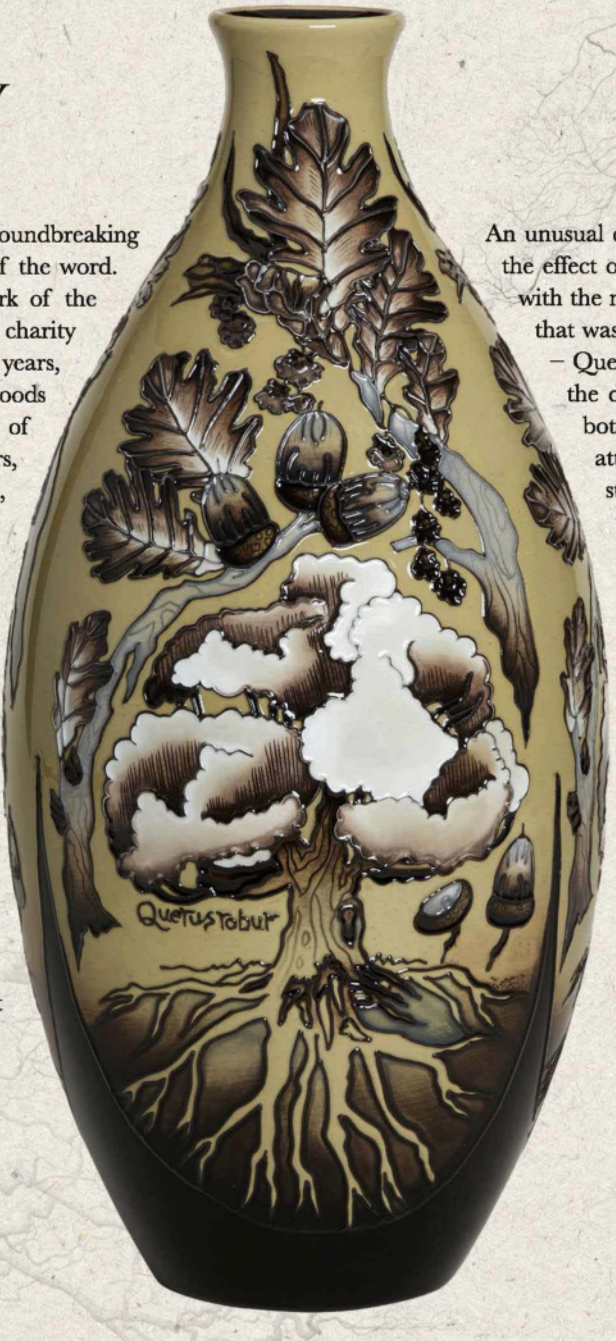

THE MAJESTY OF TREES

The Majesty of Trees is a groundbreaking Moorcroft collection in every sense of the word. Bringing together the admirable work of the **Royal Forestry Society ('RFS')**, a charity who have devoted effort for over 140 years, to promote the wise management of woods and trees, through their network of knowledgeable landowners, foresters, arborists and others and **Action Oak**, a partnership solely dedicated to the protection of the Country's oak tree legacy and health.

Moorcroft were delighted to have been granted permission to launch this new collection at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire – an Estate which is home to more than 866 veteran oaks in an area known as High Park. Standing proud in the Applied Arts, The Mighty Oak comes as a design rooted in botanical drawings and diagrams of trees which illustrate just how a tree is broken down into different component parts at various stages of life.

RP: £980

An unusual celadon coloured clay is used to create the effect of old parchment paper and to tone in with the natural colour palette of an oak tree. If that was not enough, The Latin name for Oak – Quercus – is tubelined with liquid clay on the design in a fine font as if to unravel a botanical drawing. The meticulous attention to detail is evident in every stroke of the artist's brush and is, without doubt, heritage Moorcroft craftsmanship at its finest. This nostalgic design holds both historical significance and aesthetic appeal. Its timeless charm transcends generations in much the same way as an acorn grows to a veteran oak.

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Incised into the clay on the base of this Limited Edition will be a special Action Oak backstamp for future provenance.

SAVOUR THE LAST DANCE

For **Nigel Slater**, one of the great joys of autumn is the sight of golden, bronze and rich-red leaves gently falling – a slow dance that completes the circle of life

ILLUSTRATION **PAUL WEARING** PORTRAIT **JOHN CAMPBELL**

Sitting at my desk, I can see them fall: leaf upon leaf, in shades of ochre and gold, orange and honey. Leaves from the cherry and the wisteria, chestnut and jasmine, each one waving 'goodbye' as they pass the study windows. I have been charmed by falling leaves all my life, and even now I am not past throwing handfuls into the air each autumn, watching them fall slowly back to earth.

The leaves of the vast, ornamental cherry on the street outside my house descend slowly, clearly in no hurry to meet their fate. They end their year in shades of butter and rust, but without the brilliant reds and oranges I hope for. Nevertheless, even in their muted colours, the cherry's leaves are just as beautiful (to my eye at least) as the blossom in spring, and slightly longer lasting. The majority fall underneath the canopy and can stay and rot, but too many clog the granite gutters of the street outside. These leaves I brush up and shovel into a bag, sneaking them, like stolen treasure, through the house to my own compost heap.

Those of the horse chestnut trees that tower majestically along the grass verge are left to crumble to dust, enriching the root-packed ground underneath. They take a while to break down, particularly their stems. Among them are conkers, shining brightly, as if polished by fairies. For several years now, these leaves have fallen early, the trees appearing to suffer from *Guinardia*, the chestnut leaf blotch. Unsightly, but rarely fatal to the trees.

I long for windy autumn days, simply to watch the falling leaves dance and flutter on the breeze, their last waltz before they begin their journey back to the earth, decomposing among the trees' tangled roots. With luck they will fall in piles, so eternal children ▷

> I long for windy autumn days, simply to watch the falling leaves dance and flutter on the breeze, their last waltz before their journey back to the earth

▷ like myself can kick them before the street sweepers get to them, or a hedgehog finds a winter home in them.

The favourites, if there can be such a thing, are the leaves of my beech topiaries, which brown crisply but hold on to the branches throughout the winter. As we are currently trying to get the beech 'bee-hives' back into shape, last year the leaves were lost to a stiff pruning in late autumn, but we may leave them be this year. I love them for the way they tenaciously hold on all winter, providing a gentle brown backdrop for the snowdrops underneath, and their tendency to rustle in the winter wind. It is a comforting sound.

Not all falling leaves are loved. I could do without the pesky stems of the robinia. The leaves are tiny and stick to the broom; the stems lodge in the tines of the rake. Left in place, they look untidy and take ages to break down on the compost. Their only charm is the way they fall when caught on the wind, like a gull riding a sea breeze.

If the gentlest leaf-fall is that of small, lightweight plum and apple that rise and fall on the currents, then the most dramatic is that of the fig that sits to the left of the garden. It is as if the huge leaves, like the hands of a giant, whisper to one another 'ready, steady, GO…' and come crashing to the ground en masse. A leaf-fall that sounds like an avalanche.

The timing of my usual spring trip to Japan changed last year, and I was able to see the native trees in their autumn colours. The sight of acers in their end-of-year costumes made me plant a further two within days of arriving home. Given enough sun to ripen their leaves, they display vibrant hues often missing in my own acers and cherry – leaves the colour of ginger and turmeric, apricot and claret and every imaginable shade of ochre.

As a teenager, I collected autumn leaves and pressed them between the pages of heavy books, only to forget about them until spring, when they would re-appear like forgotten bookmarks with each turn of the page. I am still not past picking up an exceptional leaf or two to press under the weight of a book. They keep their colour surprisingly well. Just don't try it with jasmine sprigs; the fine dust they crumble to is annoying in a book, like getting sand between your toes.

I have chosen the small trees in my garden with half-a-mind to autumn colour. The *Cornus kousa* and the *Acer palmatum* were no-brainers, but there have been surprises, such as the amelanchier, whose leaf colour I didn't consider and is now a highlight of the season, plus the orange edges to the deep-green leaves of the witch hazel. Given a longer, more radiant summer, there might have been even better colour in my north London patch.

I do tire of sweeping fallen leaves from the terrace and the gravel paths, an almost daily task at this time of the year, but it is a small gripe compared to the spirit-lifting joy their colours bring. I feel no sadness that the leaves have gone for another year. They will break down and enrich the soil in which the trees stand, and I know they will be back, in shades of piercing spring green, very soon. ☐

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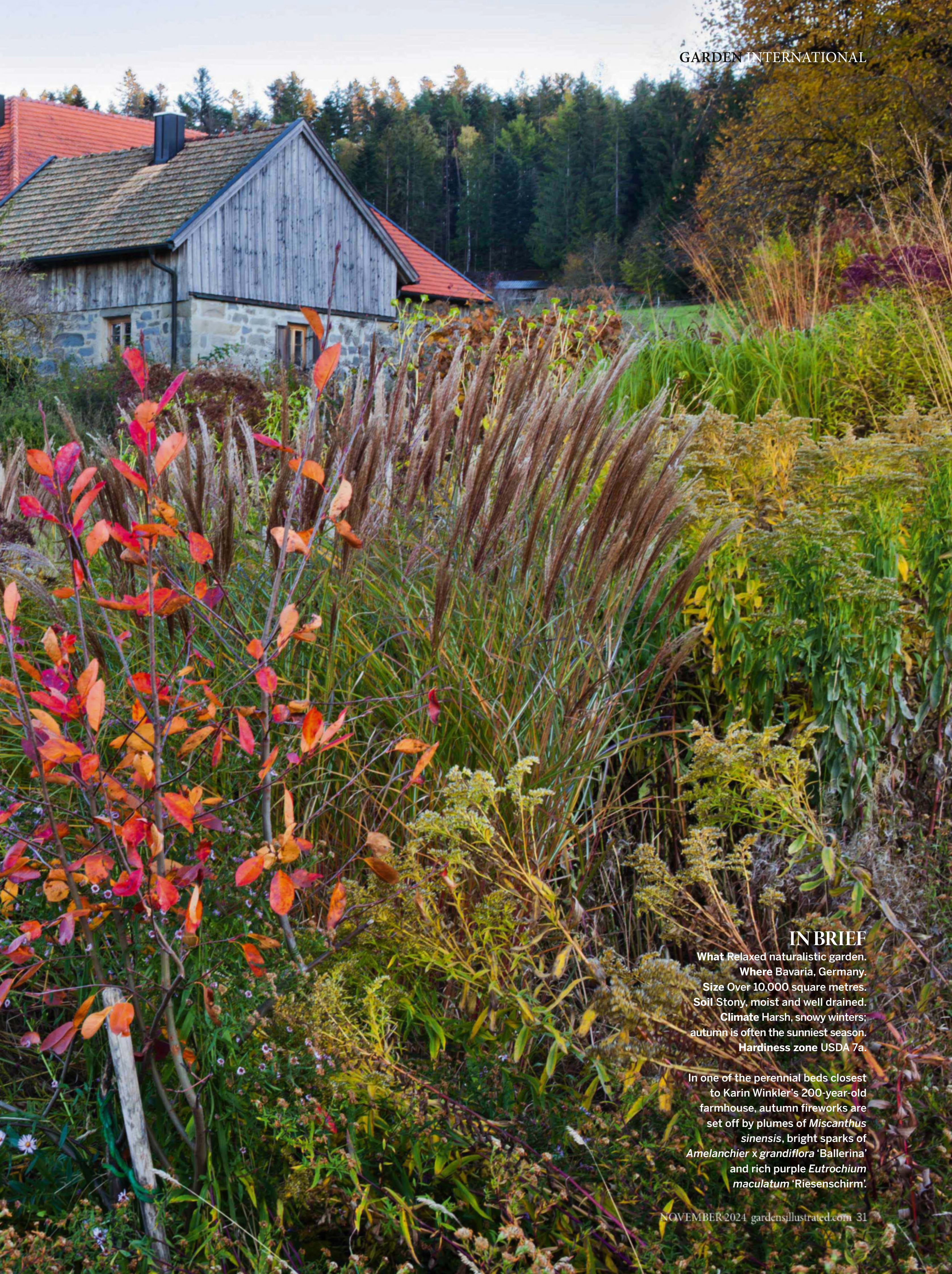
Second nature

With no horticultural training, art teacher Karin Winkler relies on intuition to create her naturalistic garden, which comes into its own each autumn

WORDS **CLAIRE MASSET** PHOTOGRAPHS **ROBERT MABIC**



IN BRIEF

What Relaxed naturalistic garden.
Where Bavaria, Germany.
Size Over 10,000 square metres.
Soil Stony, moist and well drained.
Climate Harsh, snowy winters; autumn is often the sunniest season.
Hardiness zone USDA 7a.

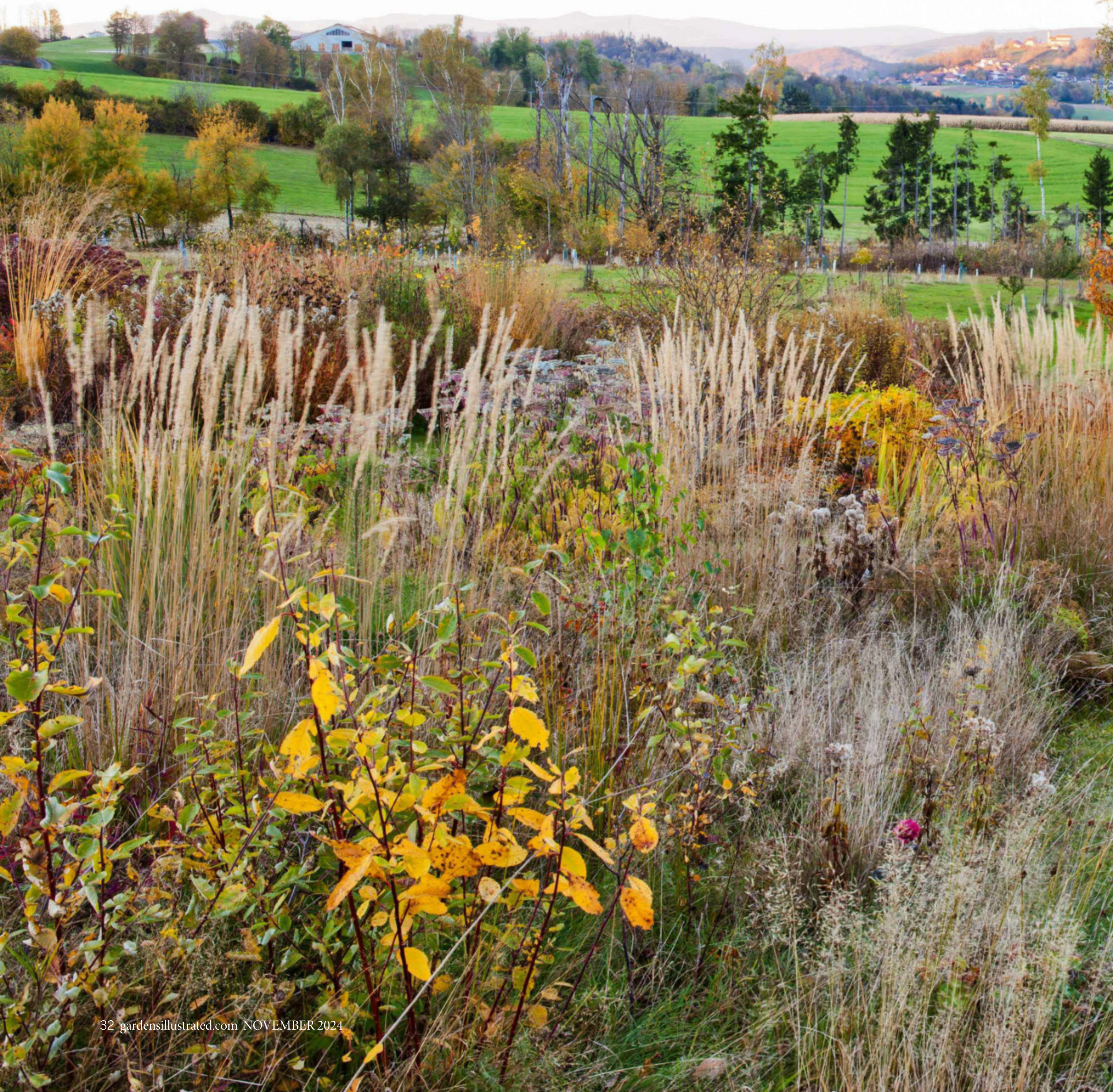
In one of the perennial beds closest to Karin Winkler's 200-year-old farmhouse, autumn fireworks are set off by plumes of *Miscanthus sinensis*, bright sparks of *Amelanchier* x *grandiflora* 'Ballerina' and rich purple *Eutrochium maculatum* 'Riesenschirm'.

If the grasses and perennials pioneer Karl Foerster could see Karin Winkler's garden, he would be proud of his legacy. Set among rolling pasture, hills and forests, Karin's 10,000 square metre plot in the eastern tip of Bavaria is the embodiment of Karl's low-maintenance, nature-inspired gardening ideals. Laid-back plantings are cut through by lawn paths that invite discovery and multiple vistas.

The show starts early with carpets of hellebores, primroses and narcissi, and culminates in an Indian summer spectacle of silhouetted seedheads, flaming foliage and silvery grasses. "The winter is long and cold here," says Karin. "And the garden only starts to look summery in August. Often the best time for sun and dry weather is autumn."

Karin's creation, in contrast to many naturalistic gardens, is unrestrained by design or planting dogmas. When she started gardening the plot in her early twenties, she had no grand plan. Now in her fifties, she still doesn't. She just loves plants, especially perennials. Her favourites are phloxes, brightening the summer and early autumn garden in shades of pink, purple and white. Quoting Karl Foerster, she says: "A garden without phlox is not only a mistake but a sin against summer."

The garden consists of variously sized island beds – some long and thin, others more



Feathery, transparent screens of *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' stand tall among the borders' turning leaves and crystallising seedheads, while *Eupatorium cannabinum* and *Sanguisorba canadensis* add further height.

rounded, but all substantial and organically shaped. Each year she adds a new border. One of her latest was more than 120 square metres. The extra work is no deterrent, and she relishes her annual trip to Christian Kress's nursery, Sarastro, just over the border in Austria. "I take a wallet full of cash and fill my car up," she says.

Karin favours taller perennials, such as eupatoriums, white willowherb, *Silphium*, *Cephalaria gigantea*, *Cicerbita plumieri* and *Althaea cannabina*, and combines them with stately grasses, including molinias, miscanthus and *Stipa gigantea*. "I want to hide in my garden; that's why I like tall plants." This need for privacy may stem from her neighbours' disapproval. "People around here don't like my garden. They think it's untidy. They like things to be neat and just so."

Although Karin might choose to hide from reproving glances, she can also take advantage of the wide borrowed views whenever she likes, as there is no barrier between her plot and the surrounding countryside – a boon too for the local deer and rabbits, which can be a challenge, though Karin is forgiving of their nibbling, and plants accordingly.

Unlike many gardeners, Karin never worries about her garden, feels guilt about its

▷

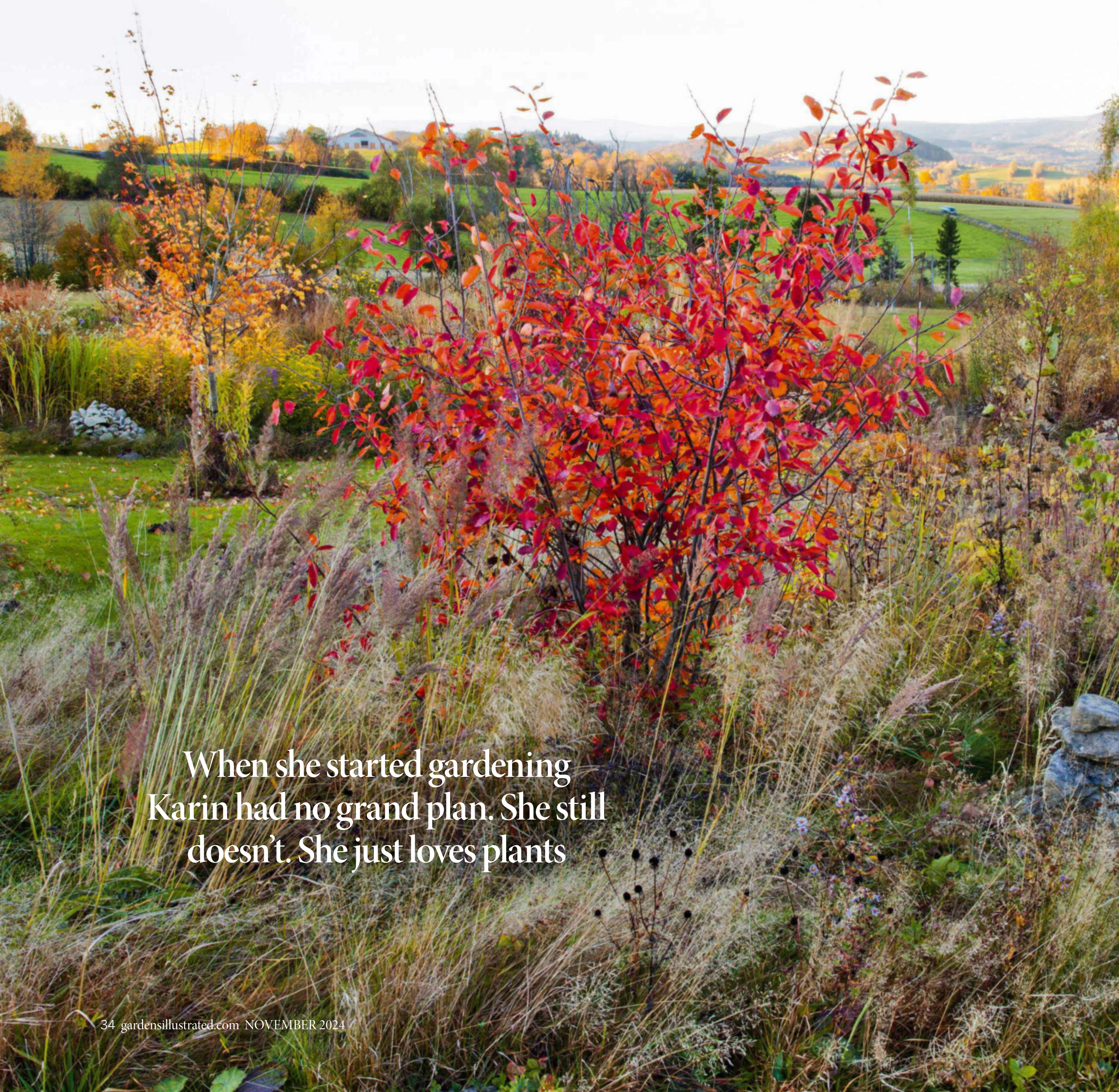
Winter is long and cold here, and the garden only starts to look summery in August. Often the best time for sun and dry weather is autumn

A young, fiery *Amelanchier* x *lamarckii* rises from a sea of grasses, including silvery sprays of *Deschampsia cespitosa* and elegant bottle brushes of *Calamagrostis brachytricha*. In the right corner and in the distance are glimpses of Karin's many stone mounds.

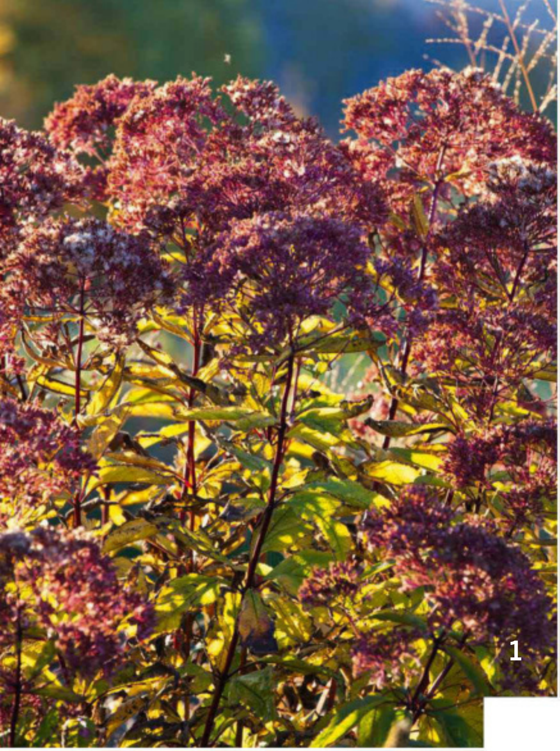
▷ maintenance, or suffers from gardener's block. With no horticultural training, she relies on her artistic bent – she teaches art for a living – and the countryside for inspiration. Ideas come to her easily and she enjoys an enviable laissez-faire approach to design, simply choosing plants that are compatible with the soil and weather. "The ground in the garden is rather wet, so I always plant perennials that thrive in this environment."

Stones too can be an issue. "The stones just seem to grow here," she says, with a smile. To deal with this, Karin uses the excavated pebbles to create little mounds within and on the edges of her borders – solid counterpoints to the loose planting. Other than a low wall, which she also built using surplus stones, there are no other structural features and no seating. Karin never feels the need to sit and contemplate, enjoying instead the close, more active connection with plants that gardening brings.

Aside from an ever-growing collection of ornamental beds, the garden encompasses an old orchard with pear, apple, plum, cherry, quince and medlar trees and a vegetable garden. Karin grows lots of blueberries too, which she appreciates as much for the fruits' rich blues against the vibrant red autumn foliage as for their taste. A few ancient trees – including a ▷



When she started gardening Karin had no grand plan. She still doesn't. She just loves plants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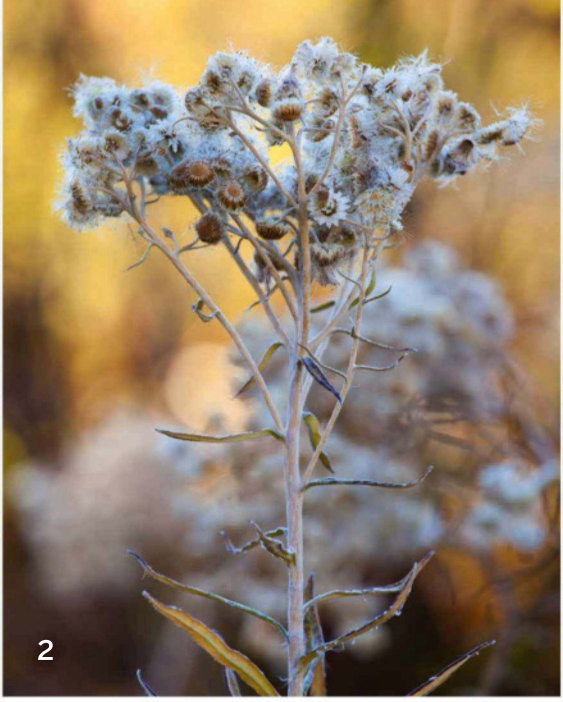
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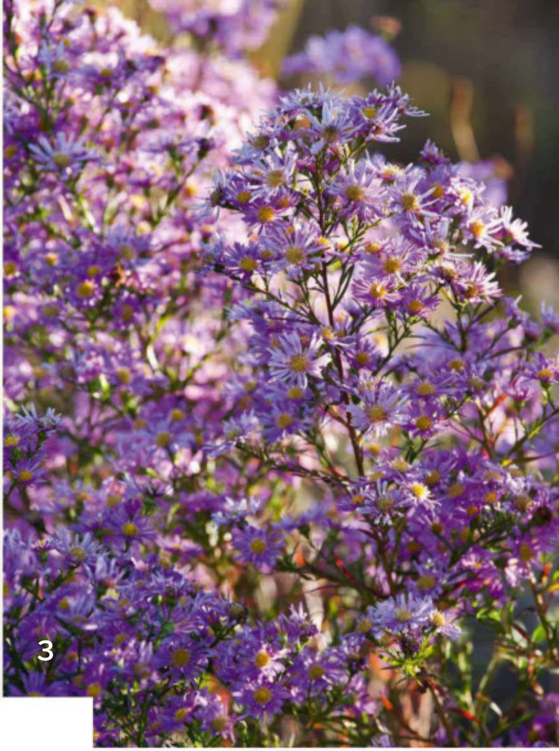
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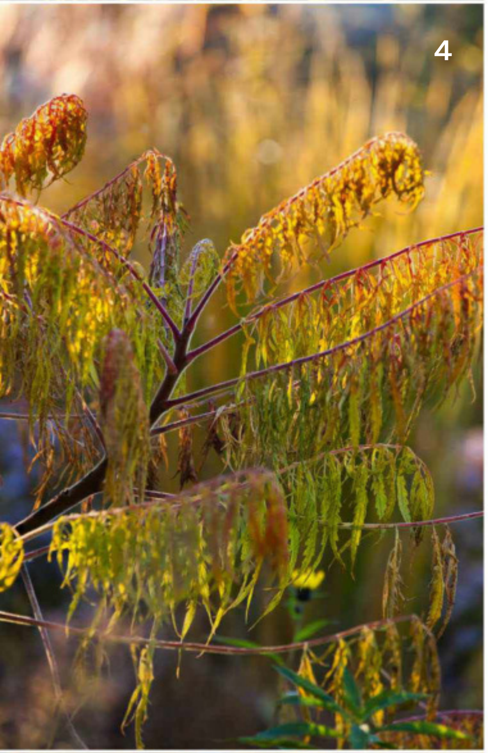
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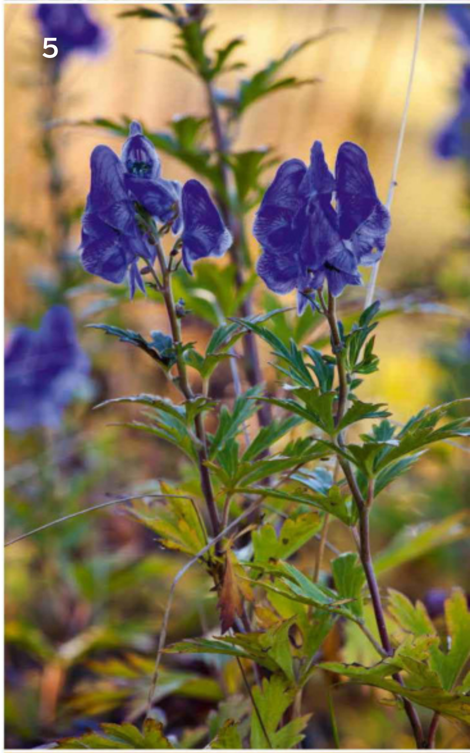
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Karin's 8 plants for autumn colour

1 *Eutrochium maculatum* 'Riesenschirm' Thriving in full sun and damp soil, this is a hardy giant that remains upright throughout the winter. Height and spread: 2.5m x 90cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b†.

2 *Anaphalis margaritacea* Clusters of white flowers in late summer last through autumn. Likes full sun and moist, well-drained soil. 1m x 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Symphyotrichum* 'Ochtendgloren' Produces generous sprays of small pink flowers throughout the autumn among mildew-resistant, dark-green foliage. Likes well-drained soil. 1.4m x 60cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 3a-8b.

4 *Rhus typhina* 'Dissecta' Turns spectacular shades of yellow, orange and red in autumn. Full sun and moist soil. 2.5m x 2.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

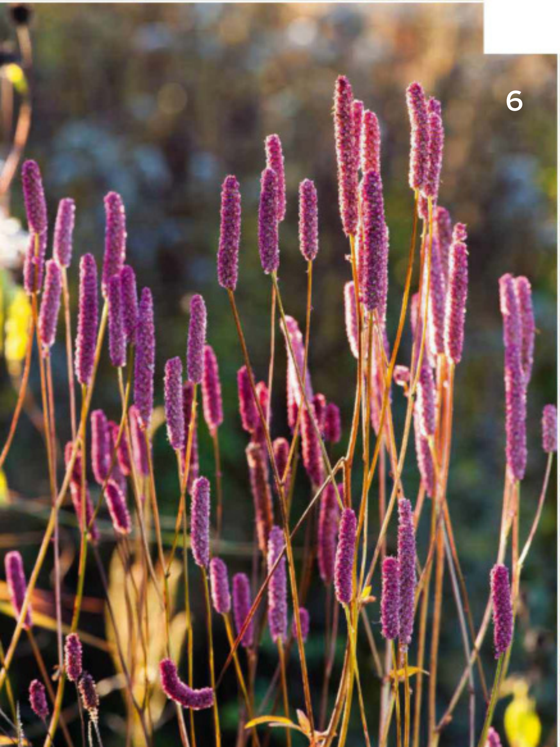
5 *Aconitum carmichaelii* 'Arendsii' With branched panicles of blue flowers, this is a striking addition to the autumn garden. Beware: all parts of the plant are toxic. Up to 1.5m x 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

6 *Sanguisorba* 'Blackthorn' Produces soft-pink bottlebrush flowers on upright stems from late summer into October. Enjoys moist soil and sun or light shade. 1.5m x 45cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

7 *Sanguisorba* 'Scapino' Bears a profusion of dark-purple flowers that are held on wiry, upright stems. Prefers a position in full sun but will tolerate drought. 1.5m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

8 *Euphorbia palustris* Starts off the season with fresh-green leaves, which turn a rich orange-red in autumn. Prefers full sun and some drainage. 1m x 2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-10b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.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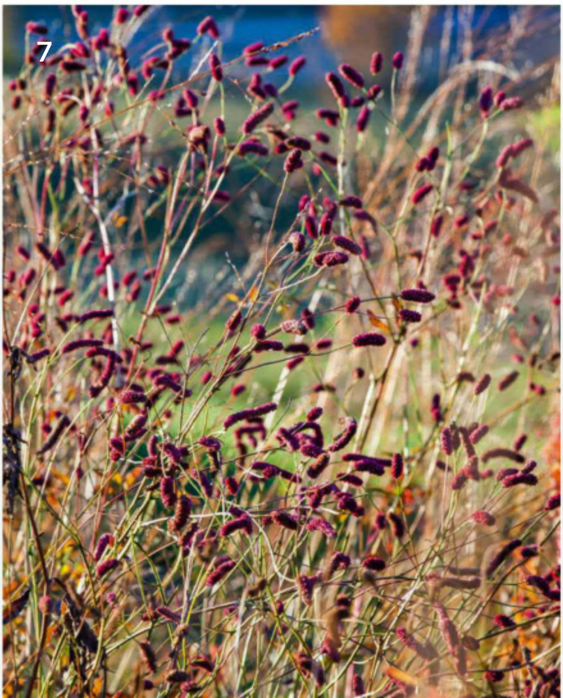
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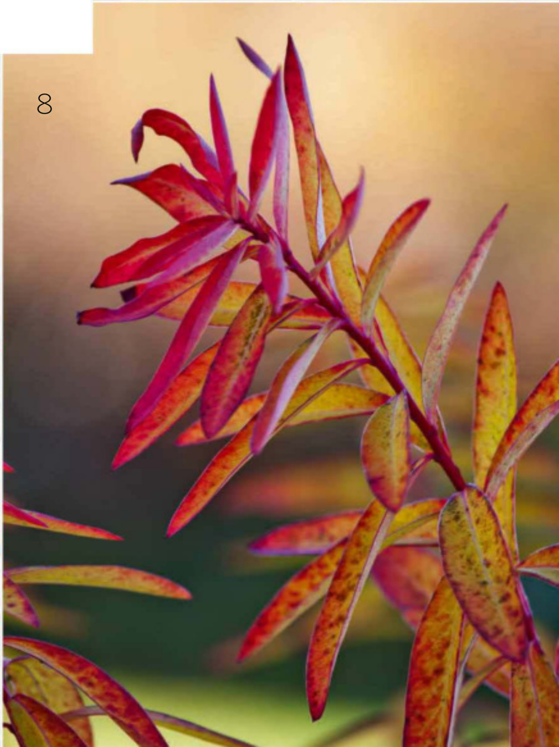
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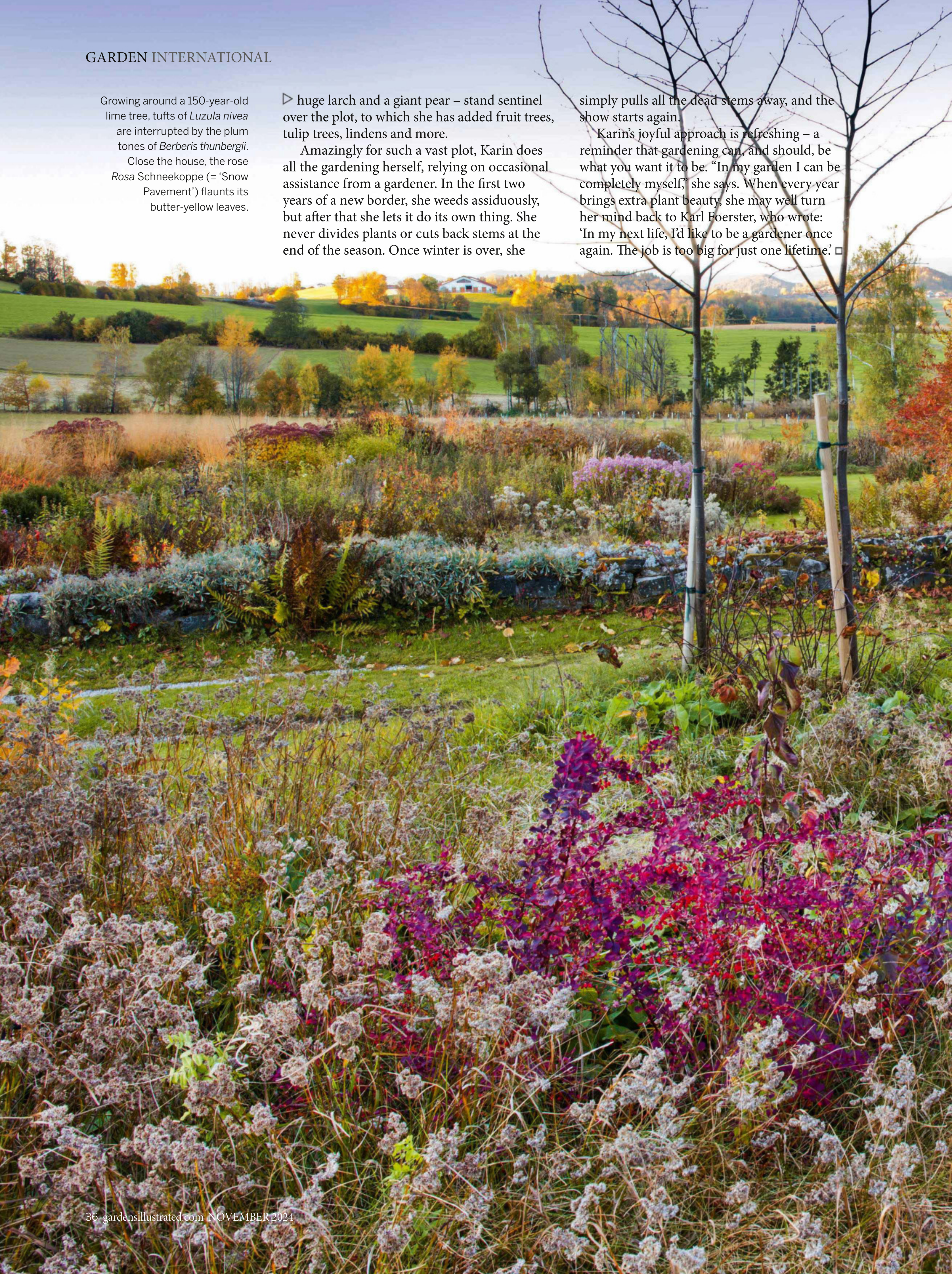

Growing around a 150-year-old lime tree, tufts of *Luzula nivea* are interrupted by the plum tones of *Berberis thunbergii*. Close the house, the rose *Rosa* Schneekoppe (= 'Snow Pavement') flaunts its butter-yellow leaves.

▷ huge larch and a giant pear – stand sentinel over the plot, to which she has added fruit trees, tulip trees, lindens and more.

Amazingly for such a vast plot, Karin does all the gardening herself, relying on occasional assistance from a gardener. In the first two years of a new border, she weeds assiduously, but after that she lets it do its own thing. She never divides plants or cuts back stems at the end of the season. Once winter is over, she simply pulls all the dead stems away, and the show starts again.

Karin's joyful approach is refreshing – a reminder that gardening can, and should, be what you want it to be. "In my garden I can be completely myself," she says. When every year brings extra plant beauty, she may well turn her mind back to Karl Foerster, who wrote: 'In my next life, I'd like to be a gardener once again. The job is too big for just one lifetime.' □

Karin’s joyful approach is refreshing – a reminder that gardening can, and should, be what you want it to be

This was Sylvia's promise to you...

A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

She kept her promise, and a gift to the Stroke Association was included in her Will. Sylvia's gift helped fund the work that made sure many more of us survive stroke now than did in her lifetime.

Sylvia changed the story for us all. Now it's our turn to change the story for those who'll come after us.

Stroke still shatters lives and tears families apart. And for so many survivors the road to recovery is still long and desperately lonely. If you or someone you love has been affected by stroke – you'll know just what that means.

But it doesn't have to be like this. You can change the story, just like Sylvia did, with a gift in your Will. All it takes is a promise.

You can promise future generations a world where researchers discover new treatments and surgeries and every single stroke survivor has the best care, rehabilitation and support network possible, to help them rebuild their lives.

Will you make that promise to generations to come? Please, leave a gift in your Will to the Stroke Association.

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Rebuilding lives after stroke

The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789).
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Stroke Association

BENNY HAWKSBEE

As a community gardener at the Eden Nature Garden in Clapham, south London, former marine biologist Benny is on a mission to promote ecology within the garden world

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory My Maltese grandad gathering tomatoes and courgettes from his mad wildlife garden in South Wales. He had a swimming pool of fish; small ponds; aviaries with birds; and guinea pigs on the ground. It was a bonkers place full of home-grown food, weeds and animals; something out of a children's book.

Who has inspired your career the most? John Little is going to cringe, but he and his wife Fiona have taught me so much. Not only flipping gardening on its head but how important it is to share your knowledge and help others out.

Who are your horticultural heroes and why? Parasitic wasps and aphid-hunting wasps. They are the masters of maintaining balance.

Favourite landscape Kenfig National Nature Reserve in South Wales, where I grew up. It's largely sand dune and salt marsh and has plants such as moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*), sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), sea stock (*Matthiola sinuata*) and more than ten species of orchid, including 90 per cent of the UK's population of fen orchids (*Liparis loeselii*). It's also home to wide range of wildlife, including rare brown-banded carder bees, sand wasps and huge aggregations of spring mining bees (*Colletes cunicularius*). Not forgetting a pool full of pike that's also home to otters and kingfishers, with a local myth of a sunken city beneath its waters.

Three worthwhile tips for every gardener Compost; propagate; re-evaluate your pruning and cutting back.

One easy thing that every gardener can do Observe more.

Favourite planting style What I like to call 'wildamental' – a fusion of wild and ornamental planting.

Favourite 'weed' Perennial sow-thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*), a vivid-yellow, weedy composite Asteraceae plant. I love watching bees fall asleep in the flowerheads.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners Understanding the fact that we are a minority and most gardens seem to be heading in a scary direction, with no plants or life. We must do more outside of our echo chambers to stop this decline.

The principles that guide your gardening Squeezing in maximum ecology, while delivering an aesthetic that people are happy to pay for.

The direction you see horticulture heading It's clearly heading towards a more ecological and kind one so I hope that's here to stay.

Do you have a particular aim? More public space gardening work; digging up pavements, tarmac and bonded resin; more Eden Nature Gardens; more food knocking about. And to stop councils, big businesses and developers getting away with ecocide.

Instagram @bennyhawksbee
Web edennaturegarden.org

> My favourite planting style? It's what I like to call 'wildamental' – a fusion of wild and ornamental planting

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO RHS GARDEN WISLEY IN SURREY, WHERE THIS PORTRAIT WAS TAKEN

TREES FOR POTS

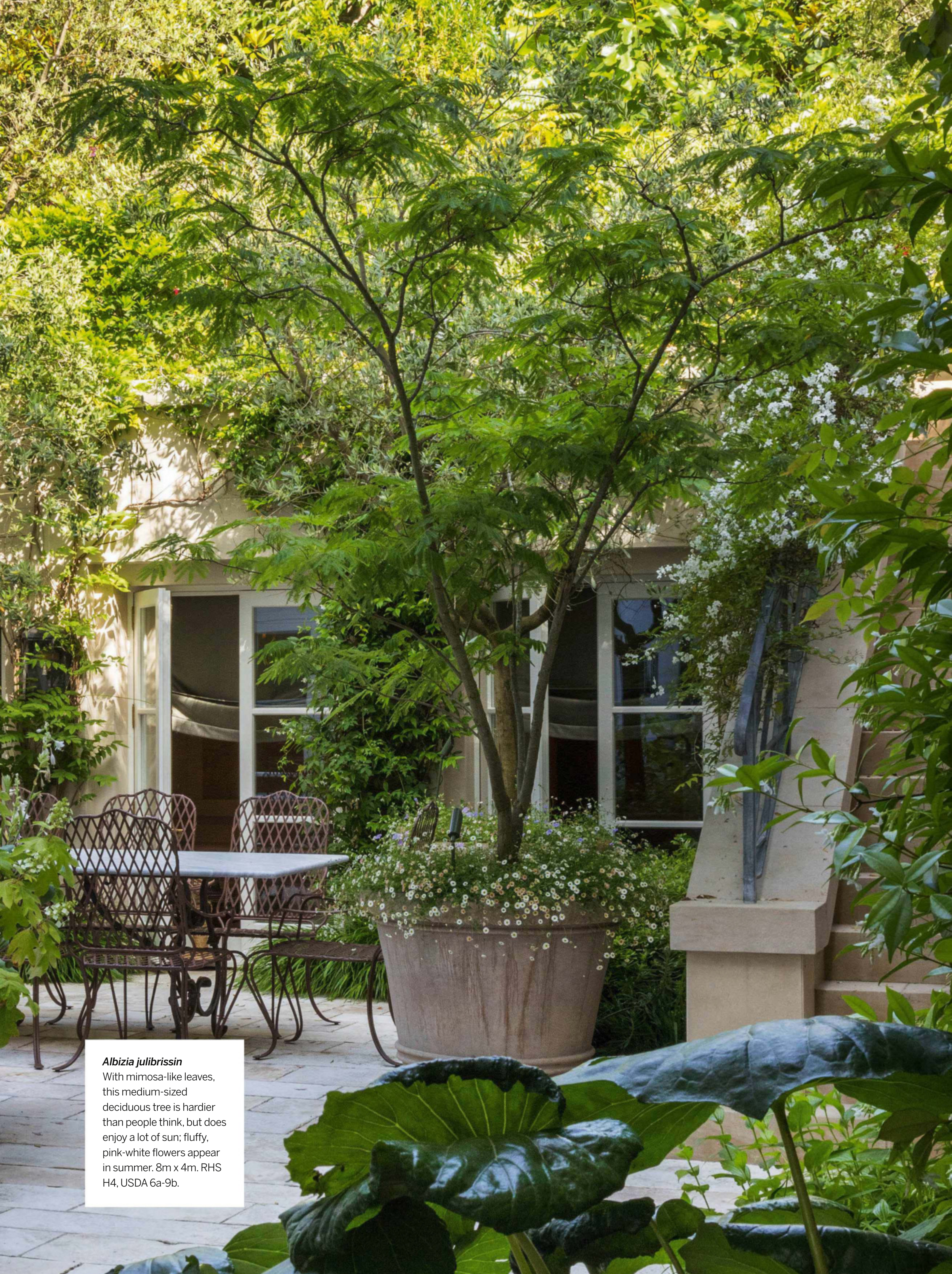
No space for a tree in your garden? Think again. We asked experts to recommend the best trees to grow in containers

WORDS **CHRIS YOUNG**

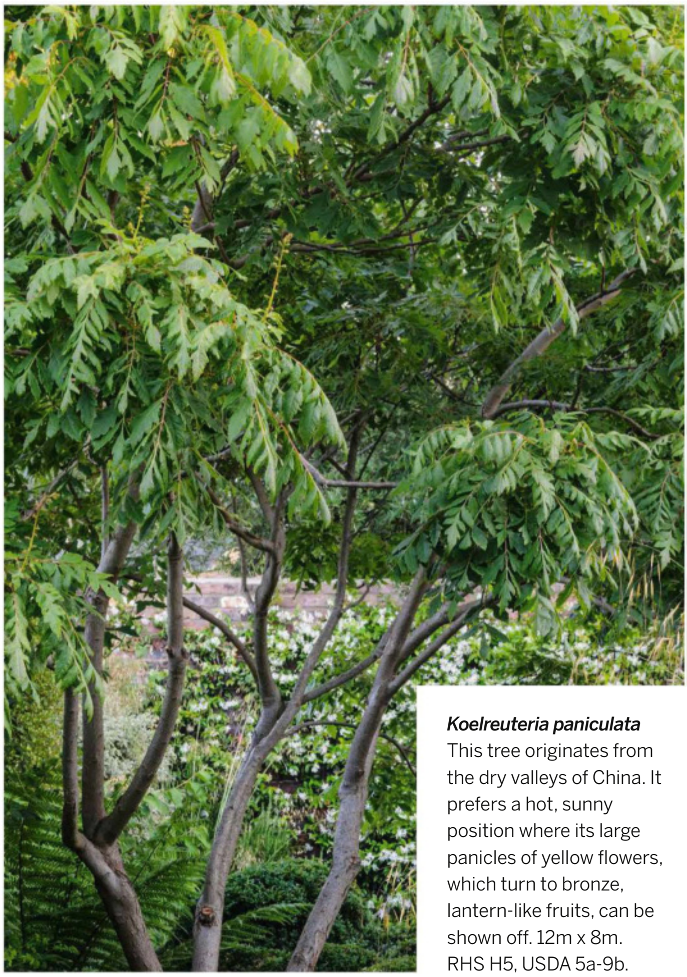
Betula utilis* subsp. *jacquemontii
For the large copper pots in this small garden, Butter Wakefield chose this deciduous tree with bark that turns brilliant white as it matures and ovate leaves that turn yellow in autumn. Yellow-brown male catkins appear in early spring. Eventual height and spread (after ten to 12 years): 12m x 8m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-6b[†].

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.

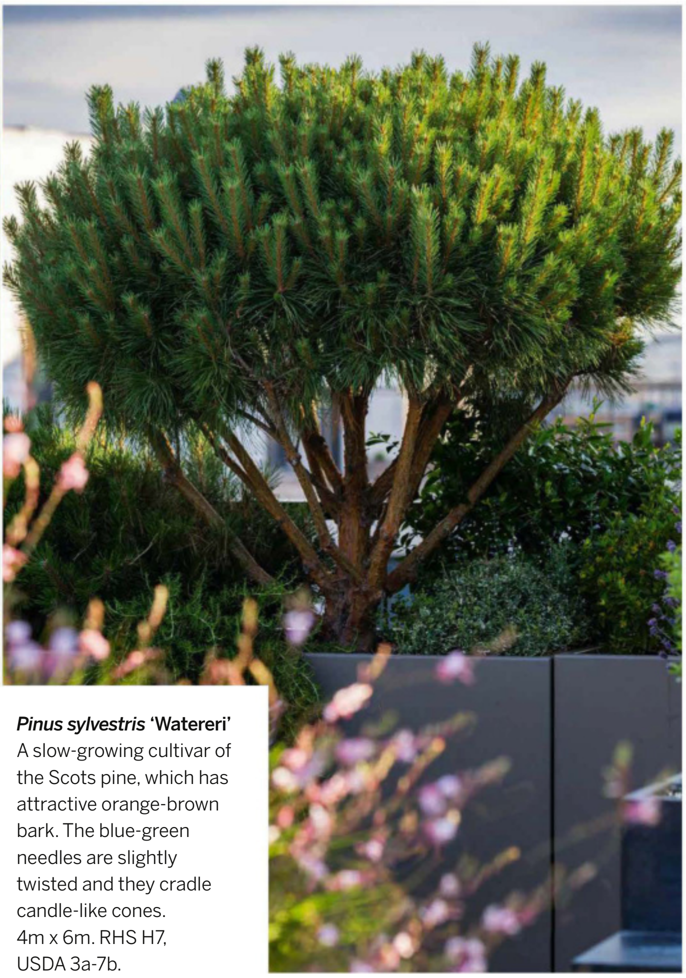
Heights and spreads quoted are for trees growing in the ground, after. Ultimate height and spread of container-grown trees will be limited by the size of the container.



Albizia julibrissin
With mimosa-like leaves, this medium-sized deciduous tree is hardier than people think, but does enjoy a lot of sun; fluffy, pink-white flowers appear in summer. 8m x 4m. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.



Koelreuteria paniculata
This tree originates from the dry valleys of China. It prefers a hot, sunny position where its large panicles of yellow flowers, which turn to bronze, lantern-like fruits, can be shown off. 12m x 8m. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.



***Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri'**
A slow-growing cultivar of the Scots pine, which has attractive orange-brown bark. The blue-green needles are slightly twisted and they cradle candle-like cones. 4m x 6m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: ELEANOR WALPOLE. DESIGN: BUTTER WAKEFIELD GARDEN DESIGN. THIS SPREAD: MARIANNE MAJERUS. DESIGN: TOM STUART-SMITH; JASON INGRAM; RICHARD BLOOM. DESIGN: EMILY ERLAM.

There's little doubt that, in the past few years, the appreciation of trees has increased. Not only has their beauty and diversity grown in the public's awareness, but so too have their ecological and environmental credentials, from attracting wildlife, providing flowers and fruit, to adding seasonal colour and even helping cool buildings and pavements in summer.

Growing them in containers is certainly one way of bringing a tree closer to your everyday world. Whether you have a small outdoor space or you can't grow plants in the ground – or you're renting and want to take a tree with you – it's worth working out how and what to grow in a pot.

The first thing to consider is what the pot is doing and how it is to be used. "A pot elevates the canopy of a small tree up to your eyeline," explains Bunny Guinness, landscape architect and podcaster. "This is really useful when you are trying to mask a building or introduce some co-ordination in an ill-matched group of buildings." A suite of co-ordinated or matching pots – or tying their colour in with window or door paint – can help simplify an area. "Using a repeated type of tree in similar pots allows you to define and create spaces around buildings," she adds.

> Using a repeated type of tree in similar pots allows you to define and create spaces around buildings

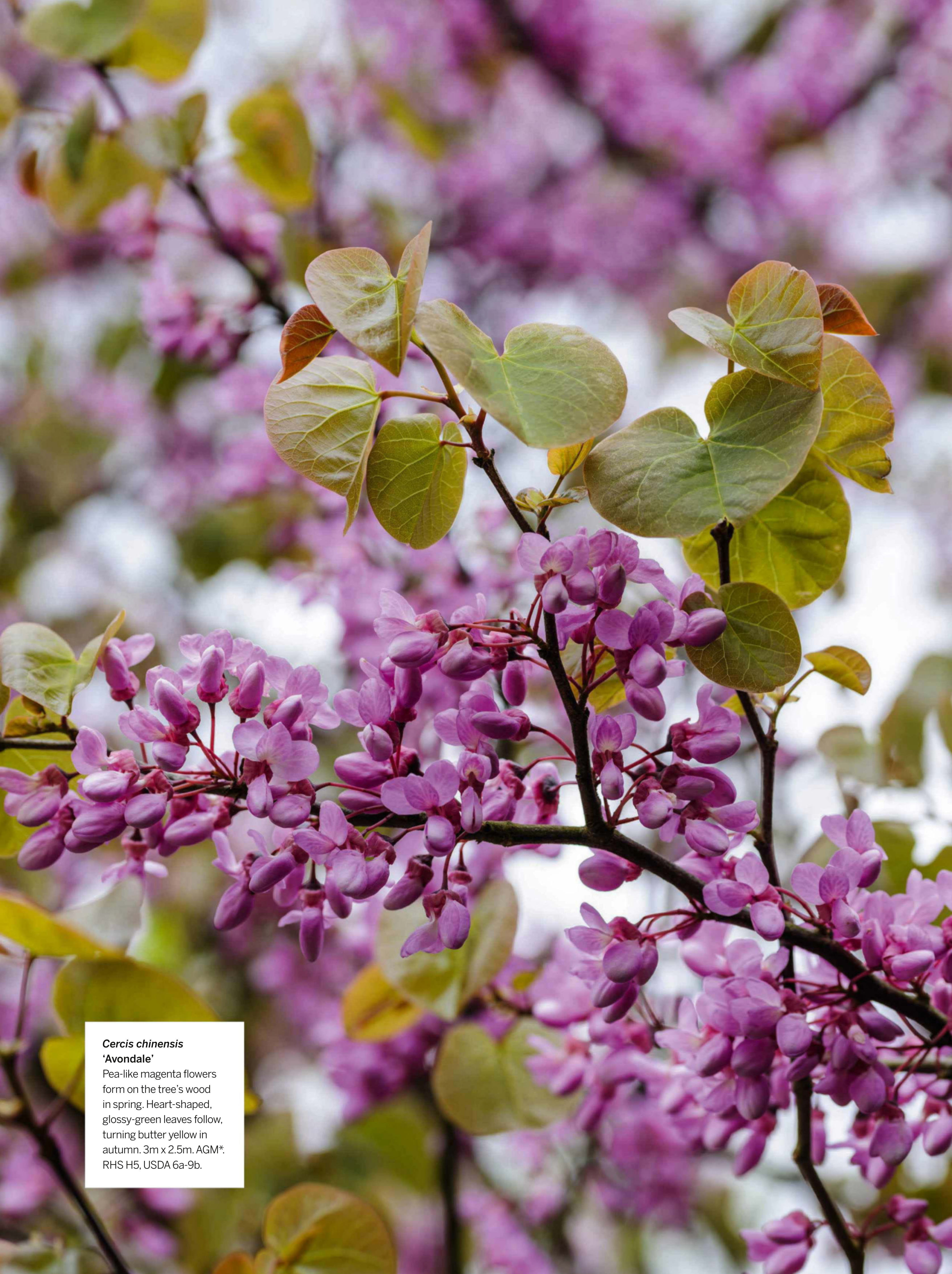
But how do you start selecting which trees to grow? "When I'm thinking about trees to grow in pots," says designer Andy Sturgeon, "I look at a more Mediterranean palette – such as olives, figs, *Arbutus* x *andrachnoides* or *Lagerstroemia indica* – as they tend to be adapted to the poor soil and lack of nutrients and water that occurs in containers. This approach also makes sure you are choosing trees that are more resilient to the increased temperatures associated with climate change."

Selecting trees with smaller leaves is another useful tip. Nick Dunn, woody plant expert and a director at tree nursery Frank P Matthews, says that trees with smaller leaves, such as Japanese maples or silver birches, can do well in pots – smaller leaves means there is less transpiration. He recommends some of the winter-flowering cherries (*Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis'), as well as more ornamental species such as Persian silk tree *Albizia julibrissin* and Chinese redbud *Cercis canadensis*.

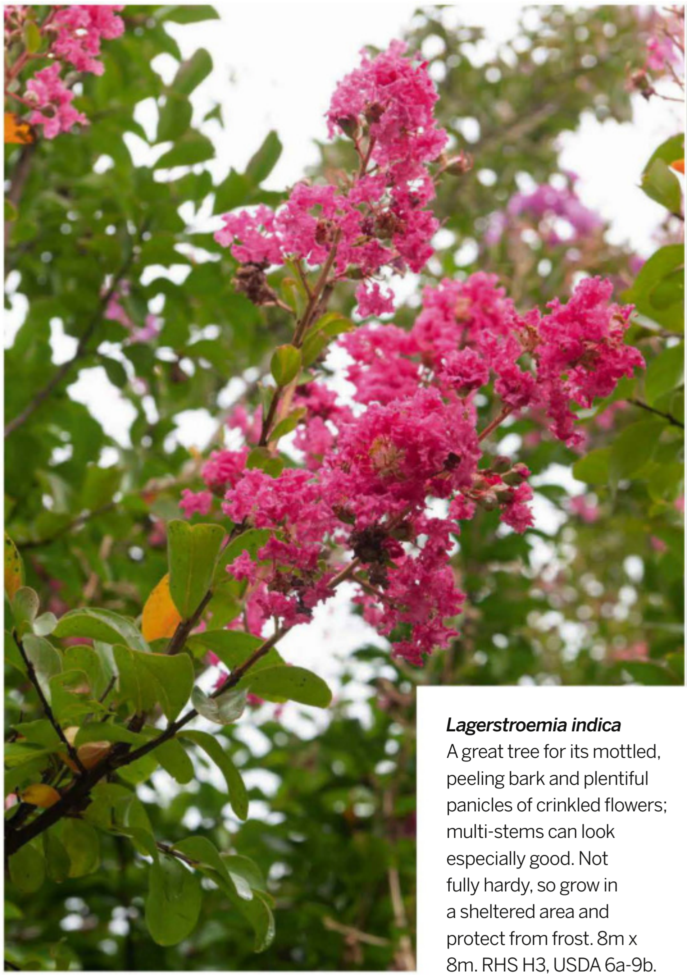
But what about trees for fruit? Garden designer Pollyanna Wilkinson loves to grow crab apples in pots. "They bring such brilliant seasonal interest to a garden," she says. "*Malus* 'Evereste' is covered in clusters of fragrant, white and pink flowers; they provide a brilliant early nectar source to pollinators and then come summer, orangey/red crab apples develop that hang on until autumn."

Historically, many fruit trees have been grown in pots – think rows of summer-loving citrus trees in terracotta pots outside an old orangery – but so too have more traditional crops. Nick Dunn says

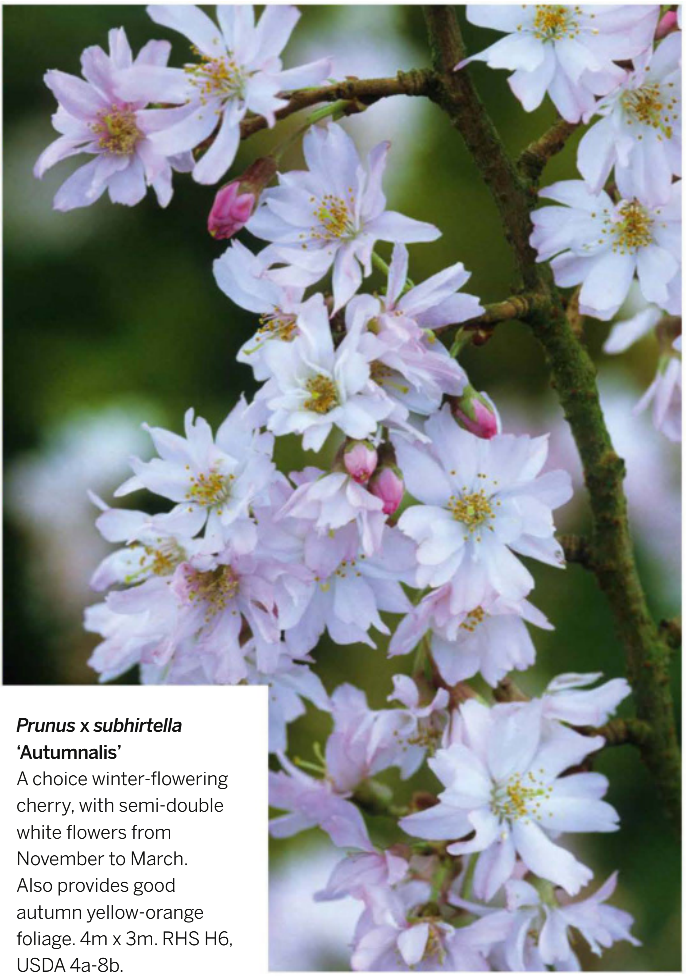
To continue turn to page 47 ▷



***Cercis chinensis* 'Avondale'**
Pea-like magenta flowers form on the tree's wood in spring. Heart-shaped, glossy-green leaves follow, turning butter yellow in autumn. 3m x 2.5m. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.



Lagerstroemia indica
A great tree for its mottled, peeling bark and plentiful panicles of crinkled flowers; multi-stems can look especially good. Not fully hardy, so grow in a sheltered area and protect from frost. 8m x 8m. RHS H3, USDA 6a-9b.



***Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis'**
A choice winter-flowering cherry, with semi-double white flowers from November to March. Also provides good autumn yellow-orange foliage. 4m x 3m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

How to grow trees in pots

- **Buy the best quality pot you can afford.** There is a huge variety of pot shapes and styles. Consider the proportion of the pot in relation to the height of the tree. If the container is going on a balcony or roof terrace, find a lightweight container that won't increase the overall weight.

- **Lighter coloured pots (ideally terracotta) are preferable** – dark pots retain heat, drying out the growing medium. Terracotta is still the best, as it is porous and doesn't get too hot.

- **Don't grow trees in a pot that is too big** – either pot them on regularly or root-prune them every few years. This involves getting an old kitchen bread knife or hori hori to cut a couple of inches of the rootball away. Then replanting in the container with fresh compost. Wide pots are better than tall, thin ones, as roots like to spread outwards.

- **If you can't root prune your trees** (maybe the tree is just too big or lifting it is impractical), consider removing the top few centimetres of growing medium. Scrape away to expose some roots and replace with fresh soil or compost. This can make a real difference to the health and strength of the plant; add in a balanced fertiliser (such as Growmore).

- **Feeding is vital**, as container-grown plants often stay in their compost for many years. Use a feed with more nitrogen and phosphorus than potassium. Whether that's a granular, slow-release feed you dig into the soil, or a regular liquid feed that is mixed with water, ensure you give them feed regularly through the growing season.

- **Even tough species need watering**, especially in drought. Don't rely on rain. Containers near a house often remain dry as rainwater gets deflected by the building.

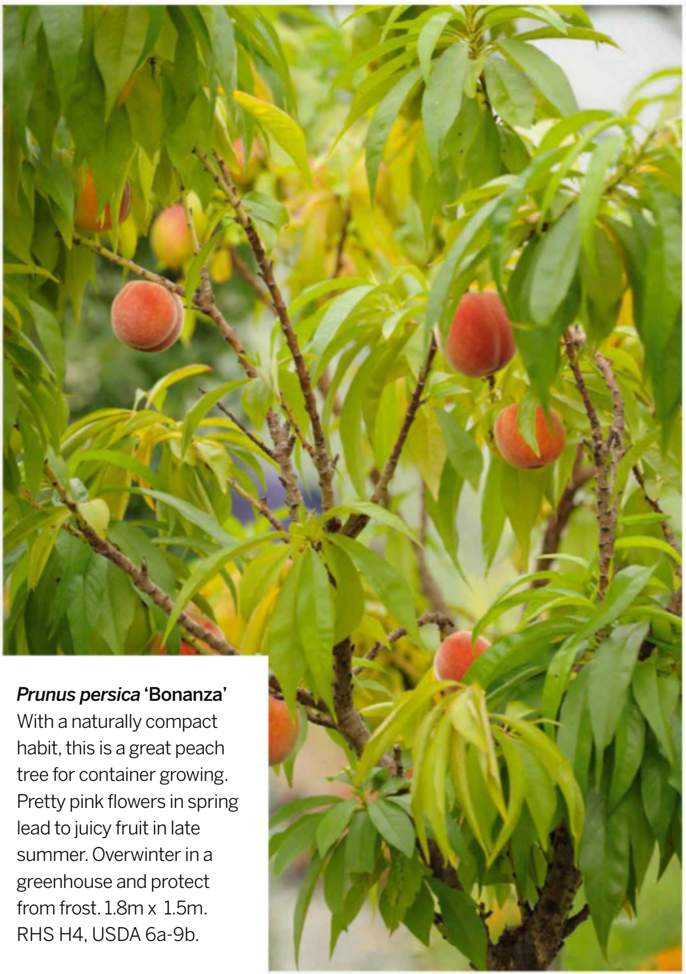
- **Use a loam-based, peat-free compost.** Go for the best quality you can afford, as the tree will be growing in it for many years. Do your research. Peat-free growing media are structurally different than peat-based formulations, especially in the way they retain moisture and unlock nutrients.

- **Wind rock can be a downside of trees in containers,** so maintain pruning, not only to keep the tree's shape for the pot, but also to ensure it doesn't get too leggy. Wind also dries out the rootball and leaves, especially in summer, so continue to water in times of strong winds.

- **There are always risks of pests and diseases** for different species, but any ill health or stress will make the plant more susceptible to them. Good hygiene, regular watering and feeding will help to give a container-planted tree the best chance of defence.

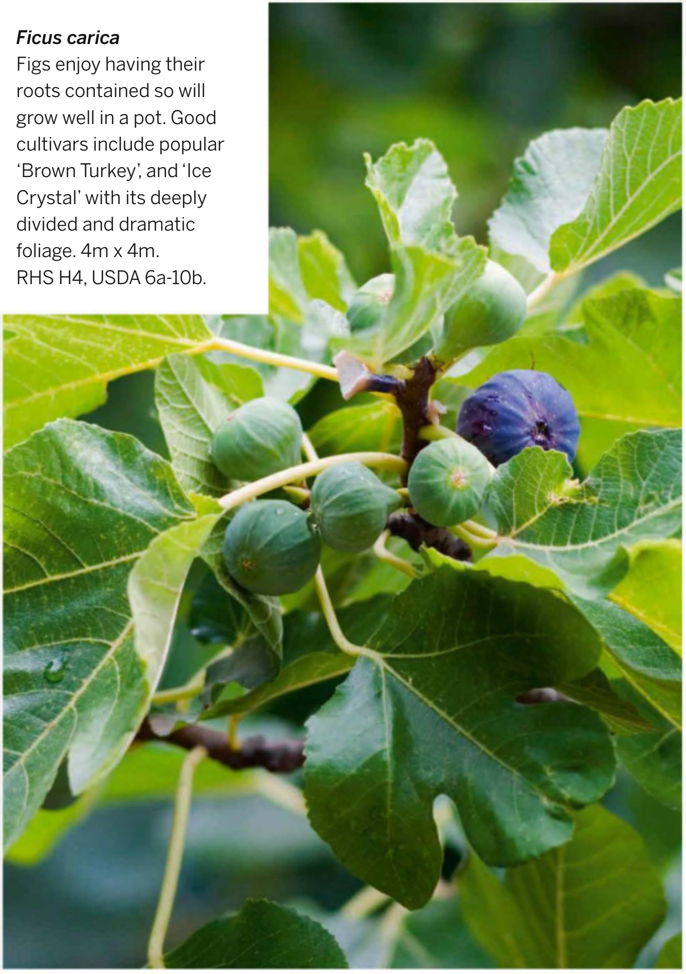
JASON INGRAM; RICHARD WAREHAM; JONATHAN BUCKLEY / BOTH GAP PHOTOS.

Arbutus unedo
A shrubby evergreen Mediterranean tree, known as the strawberry tree, this has shredding red-brown bark and leathery small leaves. White flowers and red fruits appear in autumn. 8m x 8m.
RHS H5, USDA 7a-10b.

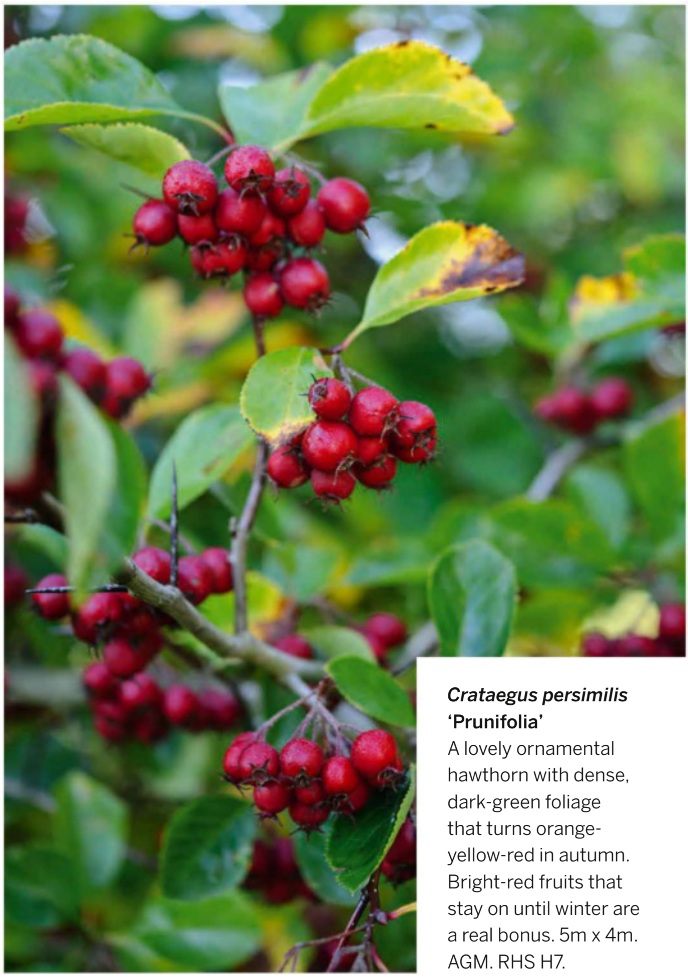


***Prunus persica* 'Bonanza'**
With a naturally compact habit, this is a great peach tree for container growing. Pretty pink flowers in spring lead to juicy fruit in late summer. Overwinter in a greenhouse and protect from frost. 1.8m x 1.5m.
RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

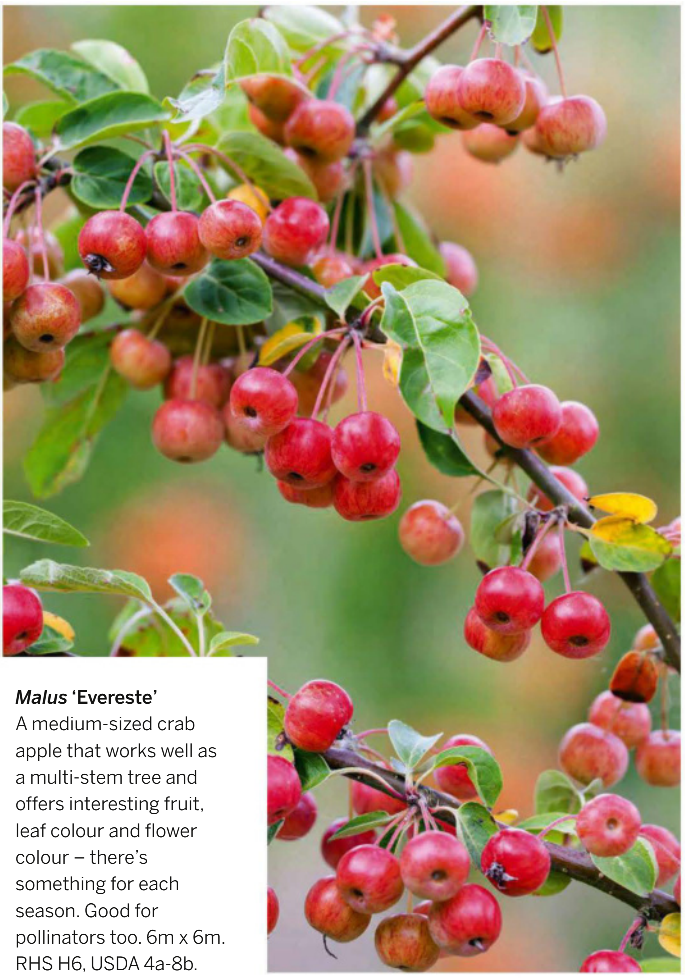
Hippophae rhamnoides
A deciduous small tree, sea buckthorn is a tough plant that tolerates the vagaries of pot life well. Has thin silvery leaves, yellow flowers then bright-orange small berries in autumn. 6m x 6m. RHS H7,
USDA 3a-8b.



Ficus carica
Figs enjoy having their roots contained so will grow well in a pot. Good cultivars include popular 'Brown Turkey', and 'Ice Crystal' with its deeply divided and dramatic foliage. 4m x 4m.
RHS H4, USDA 6a-10b.



***Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia'**
A lovely ornamental hawthorn with dense, dark-green foliage that turns orange-yellow-red in autumn. Bright-red fruits that stay on until winter are a real bonus. 5m x 4m. AGM. RHS H7.



***Malus* 'Evereste'**
A medium-sized crab apple that works well as a multi-stem tree and offers interesting fruit, leaf colour and flower colour – there's something for each season. Good for pollinators too. 6m x 6m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

▷ that apples and pears can be very happy in pots. "But don't assume you need a dwarfing rootstock, as the pot is doing the dwarfing by stressing the roots – so it's fine to choose a normal fruit tree," he says. Self-fertile apples such as *Malus domestica* 'Red Windsor' or the pear *Pyrus communis* 'Beth' (on a Quince C or A rootstock) are good selections.

> Don't assume you need a dwarfing rootstock. The pot is doing the dwarfing by stressing the root

Bunny Guinness is known for her 'baseless' pots. "I have over 80 pots in my garden and the vast majority are baseless," she says. By taking the bottom out of pots, Bunny encourages the roots to find their way down to the soil to access moisture and nutrients. "I find that any plant in a pot with a base needs constant potting on, feeding and watering – and even then, the plants don't realise their potential."

Dealing with the climate, and how the plant grows, is possibly the biggest challenge of container growing trees. Pots can dry out quickly; their size can limit root growth; water availability may be poor; and for larger specimens, pots may not give structural rigidity. So selecting tougher trees that can deal with wind, drought, waterlogging and reduced nutrients is all part of the challenge.

As a result, Nick Dunn recommends being strict with your feeding and watering regime, plus root pruning in winter every two to three years is advisable. "Ideally, you want the plant to be potted up into the next size container every few years, to allow the roots to grow, but if you can't do that, then cutting a couple of inches off the rootball and then adding in fresh compost is a great way of ensuring the trees stay healthy." Andy Sturgeon suggests planting a tree into an Air-Pot and then placing it into a larger ornamental pot to help it live longer – the only downside being the tree needs more water more frequently as the roots are partially exposed to air.

We all know that the planet needs more trees. Government targets of tree planting, and international understanding of the value of trees, means we are more aware of their benefits than ever before. Nurturing them in pots is something most of us can do, and with a bit of thought to species selection and care, we could be enjoying the benefits of our arboreal friends for many years to come. ❏

Chris Young is a landscape designer and garden consultant.

Where to see and buy

- **Barcham Trees** Eye Hill Drove, Soham, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5XF. Tel 01353 720950, barcham.co.uk
- **Frank P Matthews** Berrington Court, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire WR15 8TH. Tel 01584 812800, frankpmatthews.com
- **Majestic Trees** Chequers Meadow, Chequers Hill, Flamstead, nr St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 8ET. Tel 01582 843881, majestictrees.co.uk

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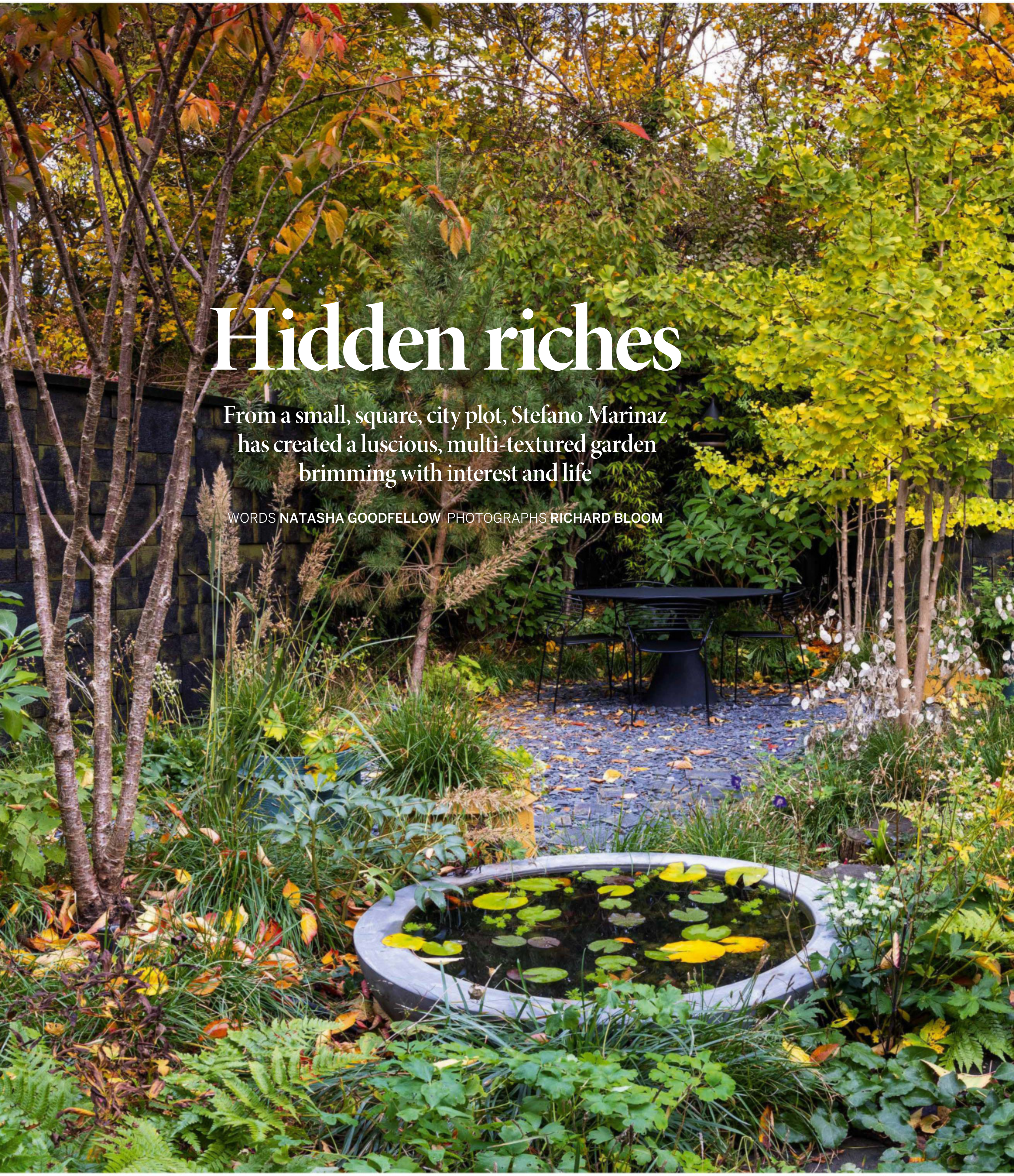
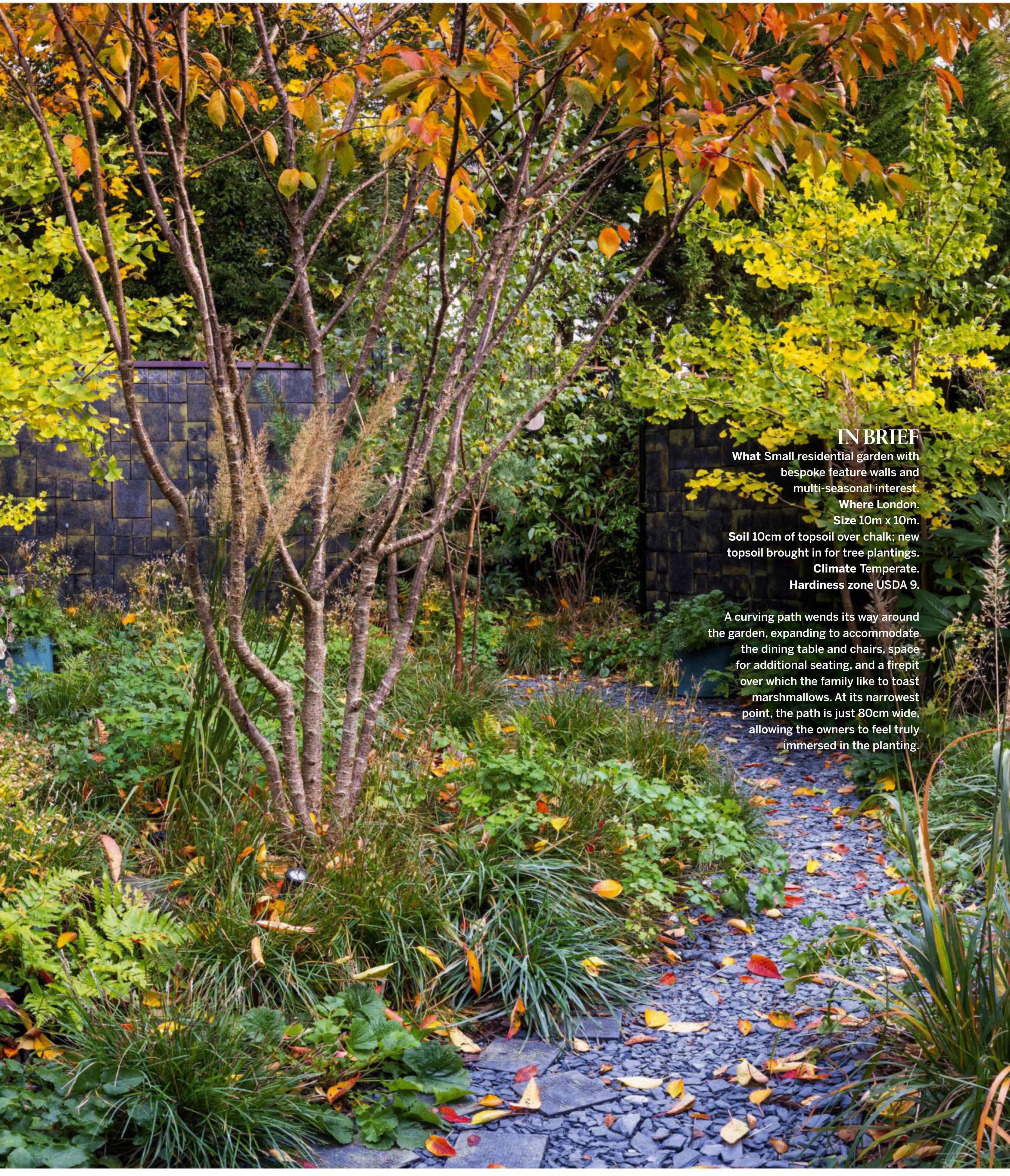


Hidden riches

From a small, square, city plot, Stefano Marinaz has created a luscious, multi-textured garden brimming with interest and life

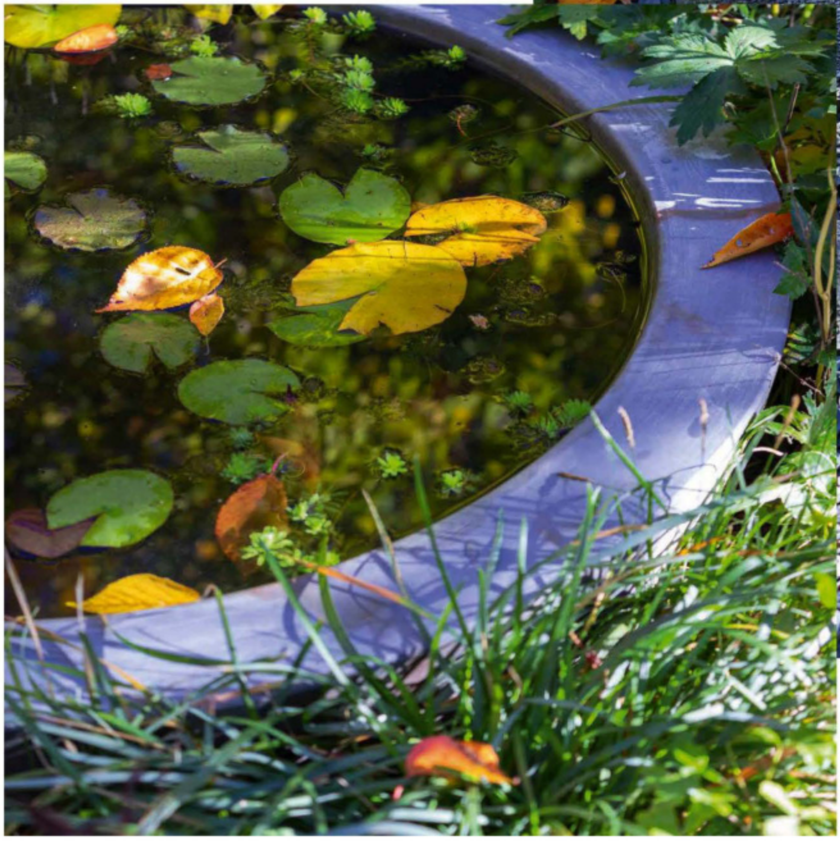
WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**



IN BRIEF

What Small residential garden with bespoke feature walls and multi-seasonal interest.
Where London.
Size 10m x 10m.
Soil 10cm of topsoil over chalk; new topsoil brought in for tree plantings.
Climate Temperate.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

A curving path wends its way around the garden, expanding to accommodate the dining table and chairs, space for additional seating, and a firepit over which the family like to toast marshmallows. At its narrowest point, the path is just 80cm wide, allowing the owners to feel truly immersed in the planting.



Above left Water is one of the best ways of attracting wildlife into a garden. In small bowls such as this, Stefano recommends planting miniature water lilies such as *Nymphaea* 'Pygmaea Helvola' as well as oxygenators such as hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*).

Above right Tiles matching those in the feature walls (see page 52) have been positioned at various points in the path to add interest, and to make a link between the vertical and horizontal planes of the garden. The path is slate chippings, which allow water to permeate into the earth below.

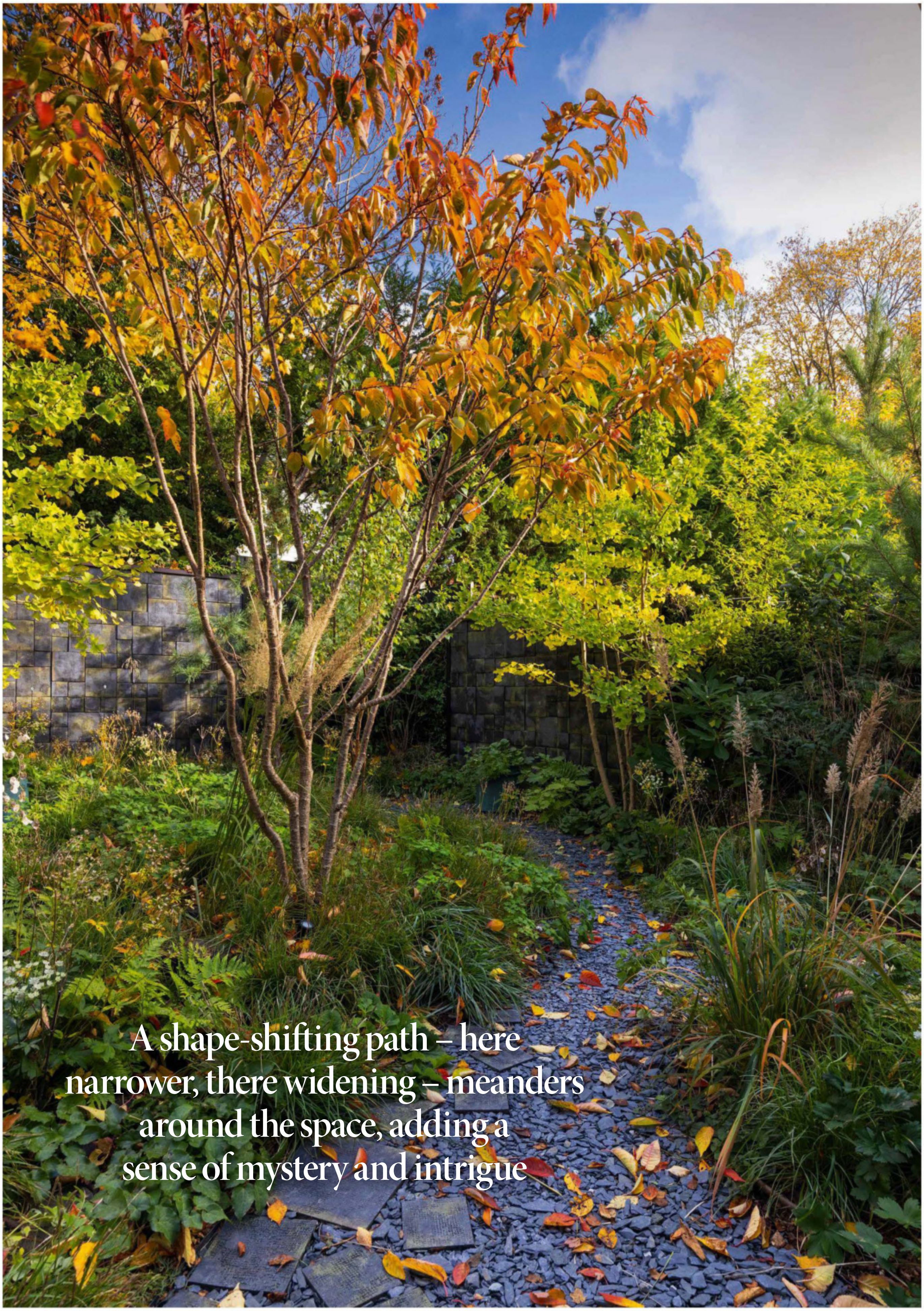
Right Although only 10m x 10m, the garden includes nine trees – three *Ginkgo biloba*, three flowering cherries (*Prunus* 'Kanzan') and three *Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri'. Together, they ensure the garden has a flow of seasonal interest.

"Our friends call it the secret garden," says the owner of this south London garden recently transformed by designer Stefano Marinaz. "You sit here and feel that there's no one else around, which is such a contrast to how it was before." When Stefano first saw the 10m x 10m plot three years ago, it was, as the owner says, "a complete desert": a patch of yellowing lawn and nothing else at all – not even a flower bed or a tree – save the mismatched fencing that surrounded it on all sides, making the space feel even smaller and more hemmed in.

Now, it couldn't be more different. Painted black, the boundaries seem to have all but disappeared. Instead, one's eye is drawn upwards and outwards by the canopy of the nine newly planted trees, in glorious shades of yellow, ochre and russet at this time of year. Three offset feature walls, each individually designed by Stefano in conjunction with Belgian ceramics company Atelier Vierkant, act more like art installations than perimeter markers. And a shape-shifting path – here narrower, there widening – meanders around the space, sometimes visible from the house and at others obscured by the planting, adding a sense of mystery and intrigue. The garden feels organic, natural; and everywhere you look, there is something to catch the eye – the shadows of the needles of the pine trees (*Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri') against a feature wall; the plumes of Korean feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis brachytricha*) shimmering in the light; and the papery seedheads of honesty (*Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow') dancing in the breeze.

The project got off to a good start right from the very first meeting. The client, who is an architect, invited Stefano over to look at the garden. "The sketch he drew there and then was so fantastic, I knew I didn't have to look for anyone else," she says. She had been clear that she didn't want a 'traditional' garden with a lawn fringed by flower beds, but other than this, a space to eat outside and a firepit, the brief was very open.

A keen proponent of the cooling properties of trees in cities, Stefano used the only real sign of life – a band of mature, densely planted woodland just beyond ▷

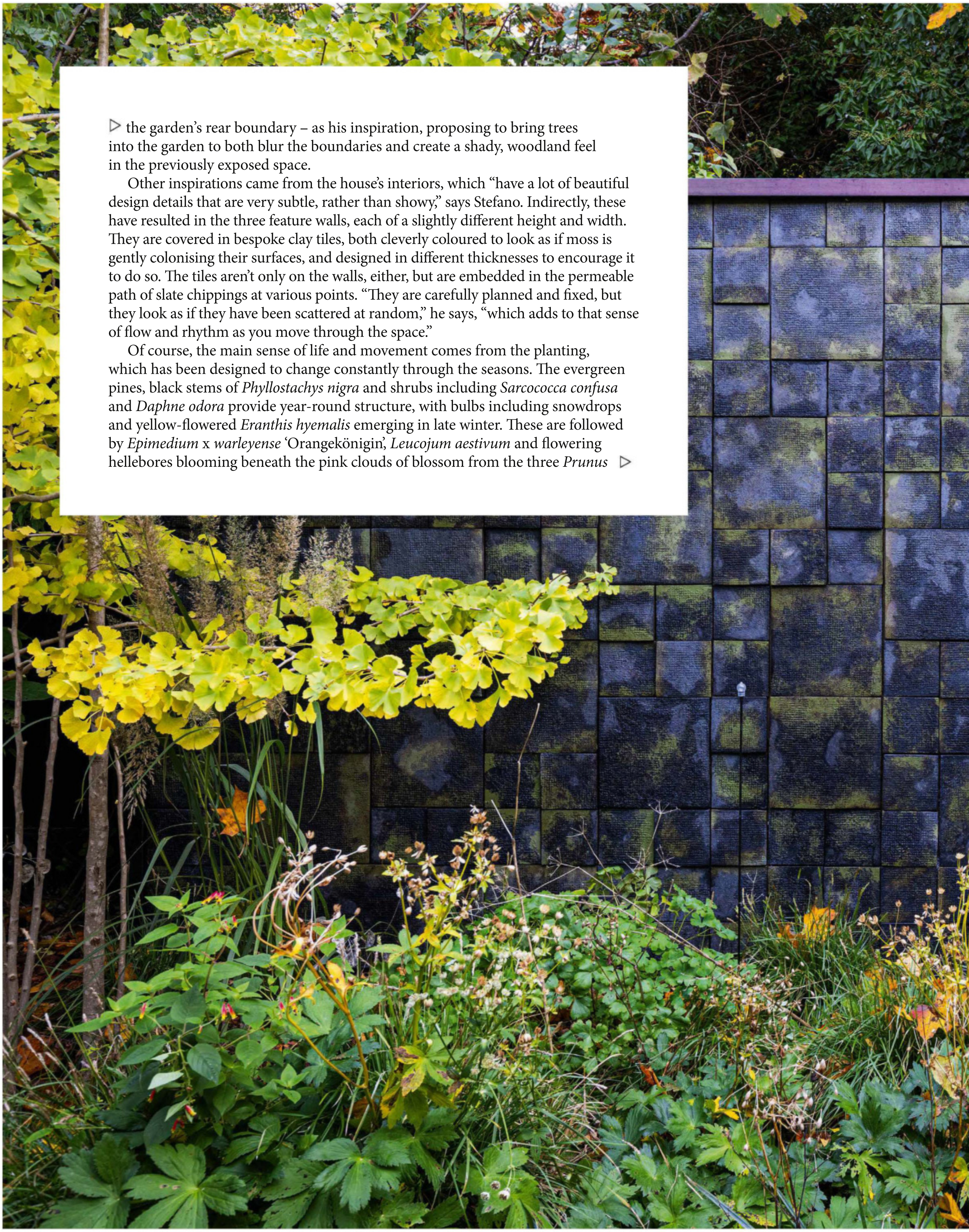


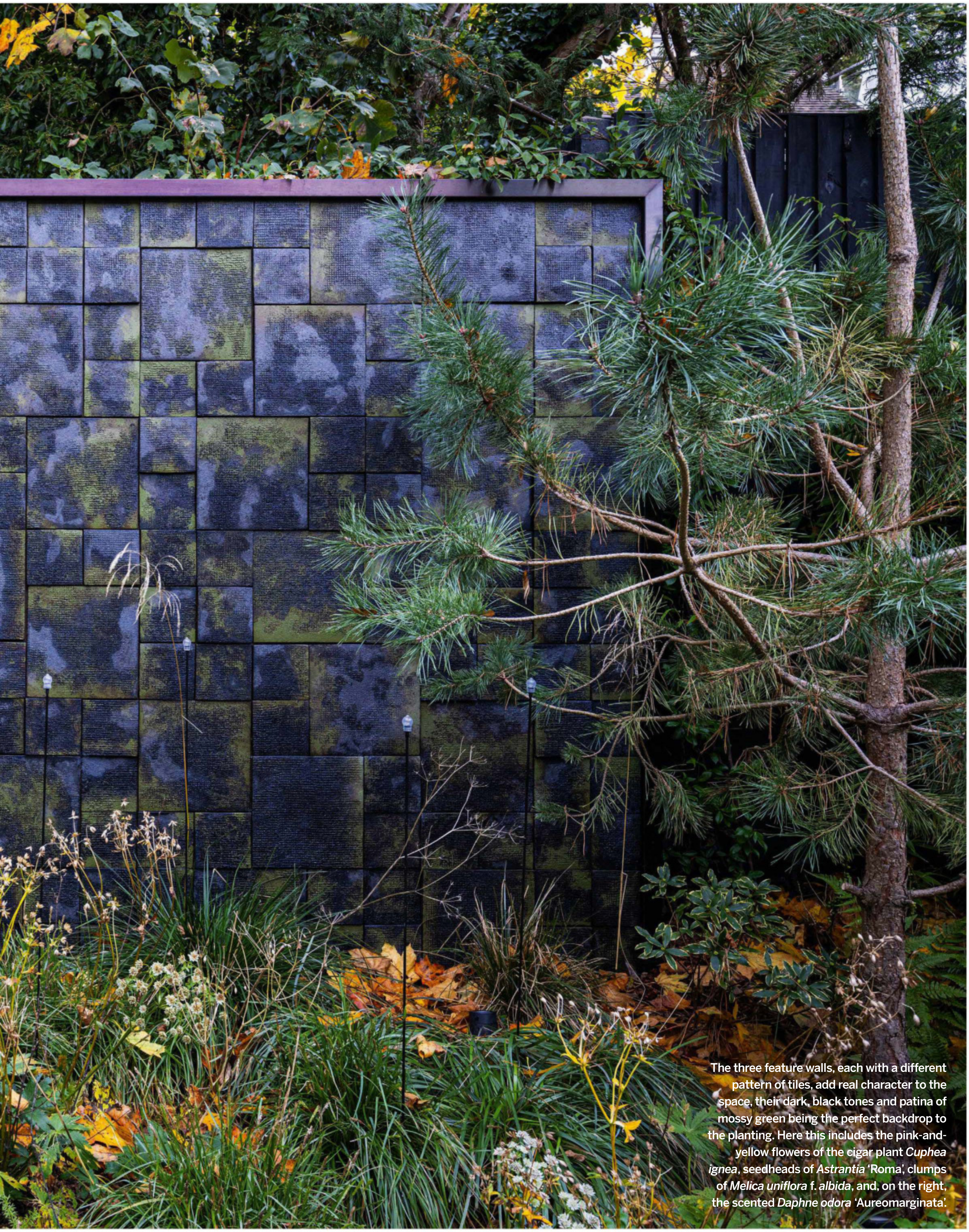
A shape-shifting path – here narrower, there widening – meanders around the space, adding a sense of mystery and intrigue

▷ the garden's rear boundary – as his inspiration, proposing to bring trees into the garden to both blur the boundaries and create a shady, woodland feel in the previously exposed space.

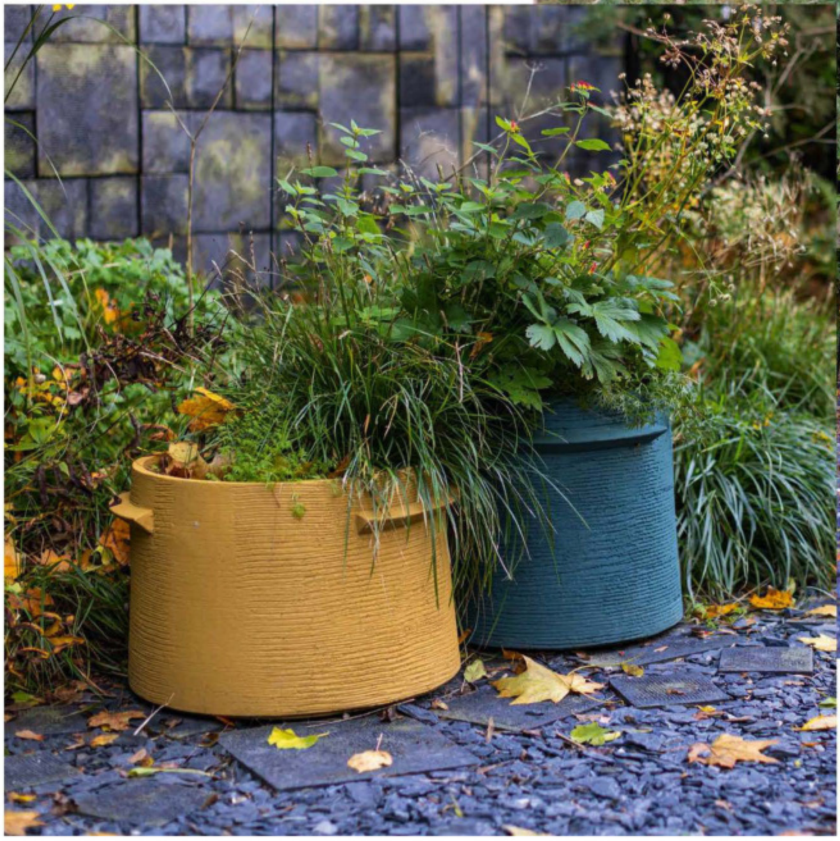
Other inspirations came from the house's interiors, which "have a lot of beautiful design details that are very subtle, rather than showy," says Stefano. Indirectly, these have resulted in the three feature walls, each of a slightly different height and width. They are covered in bespoke clay tiles, both cleverly coloured to look as if moss is gently colonising their surfaces, and designed in different thicknesses to encourage it to do so. The tiles aren't only on the walls, either, but are embedded in the permeable path of slate chippings at various points. "They are carefully planned and fixed, but they look as if they have been scattered at random," he says, "which adds to that sense of flow and rhythm as you move through the space."

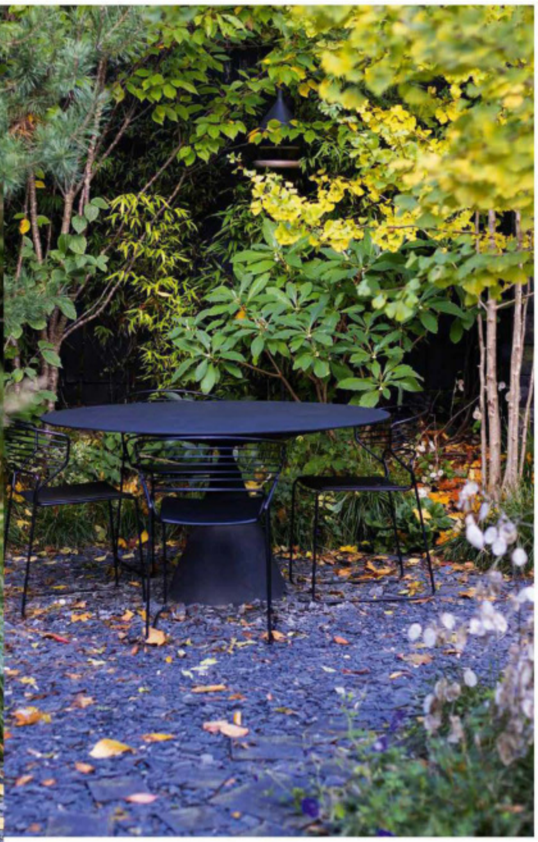
Of course, the main sense of life and movement comes from the planting, which has been designed to change constantly through the seasons. The evergreen pines, black stems of *Phyllostachys nigra* and shrubs including *Sarcococca confusa* and *Daphne odora* provide year-round structure, with bulbs including snowdrops and yellow-flowered *Eranthis hyemalis* emerging in late winter. These are followed by *Epimedium* x *warleyense* 'Orangekönigin', *Leucojum aestivum* and flowering hellebores blooming beneath the pink clouds of blossom from the three *Prunus* ▷





The three feature walls, each with a different pattern of tiles, add real character to the space, their dark, black tones and patina of mossy green being the perfect backdrop to the planting. Here this includes the pink-and-yellow flowers of the cigar plant *Cuphea ignea*, seedheads of *Astrantia* 'Roma', clumps of *Melica uniflora* f. *albida*, and, on the right, the scented *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata'.





Above left Two pots from Atelier Vierkant are planted with a mixture of grasses and perennials including *Sesleria* 'Greenlee', pink-and-yellow-flowered *Cuphea ignea* and *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat'). The yellow pot was chosen to link with the buttery autumn foliage of the *Ginkgo biloba*.

Above right The tables and chairs are from Italian firm Desalto, their black, contemporary aesthetic an excellent fit for the garden. The Koki Wire chairs take up very little space visually, which is useful in such a small space.

▷ 'Kanzan', before camassias, astrantias and *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat') lead the surge into early summer. In high summer, it's the vivid green of the *Ginkgo biloba* and the yellow bell flowers of *Kirengeshoma palmata* that take centre stage, along with developing grasses, while autumn is all about the contrast of the colours of the falling foliage with the dark walls and paths. "I specifically chose a couple of yellow pots to make a visual link with the buttery leaves of the ginkgos – a link that only reveals itself at a certain moment of the year," says Stefano.

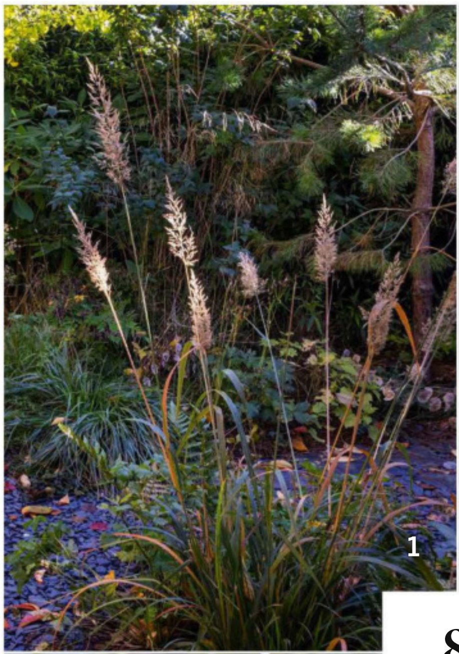
Most plants were selected for their ability to handle dappled to deeper shade, which will intensify as the trees develop, and were planted into mounded beds, made with the soil excavated for the path. "The mounds help with water run-off, allow for different types of plants to grow, and make for a much more visually appealing space, adding volume and contours," says Stefano.

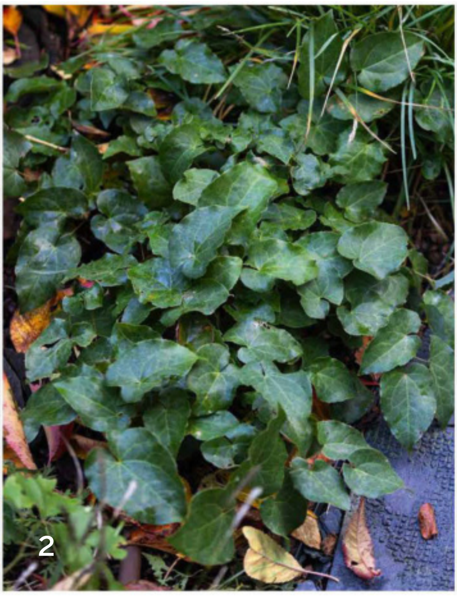
Unusually perhaps, his design eschews a dining area immediately outside the house ("When you open the doors, I want to look out not on to furniture but on to nature," he says), placing it instead at almost the furthest point from the house, which affords diners a completely different view of the garden than they have from inside. Visible from both is a small water feature, one of the best ways of attracting wildlife into any space. It is also a fun element for children, and Stefano has made a path of log stepping stones through the planting to allow the clients' daughters to get really close to it – something they love to do. "Every corner of the garden, every half metre or so, there's something different for them to explore," says the owner.

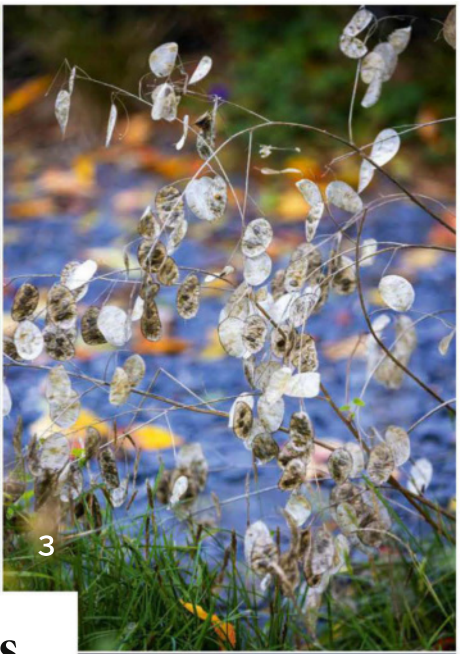
Much as the owner enjoys being in the garden and the feeling of immersion in nature that it provides, she appreciates its aesthetic qualities even more. "It's contemporary and minimalist," she says, "and, although it's so small, there's so much richness and texture." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

To find out more about Stefano Marinaz's work, visit **stefanomarinaz.com**







8 shady garden plants

1 *Calamagrostis brachytricha* Glossy green leaves that turn yellow in autumn are topped with delicate plumes of flowers from late summer. Height and spread: 1.25m x 75cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b[†].

2 *Epimedium* x *warleyense* 'Orangekönigin' Heart-shaped foliage with dainty, orange flowers in spring. Happy in most situations as long as it has some moisture. 30cm x 80cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow' A beautiful purple-leaved honesty that self-seeds freely from its coin-like seedheads. Stefano buys his seed from Special Plants to ensure it comes true. 75cm x 75cm. RHS H6.

4 *Helleborus argutifolius* Pale-green flowers sit above large and spiny, evergreen leaves (hence its common name of holly-leaved hellebore). 1m x 75cm. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

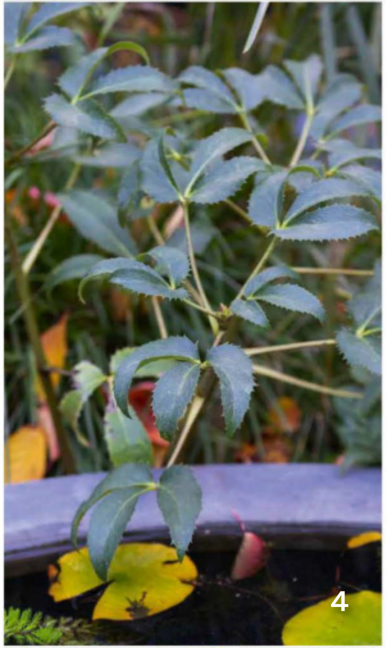
5 *Ginkgo biloba* Fan-shaped leaves turn golden yellow in autumn. Ensure you buy a male or sterile tree as female trees drop smelly fruits in autumn. 25m x 6m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

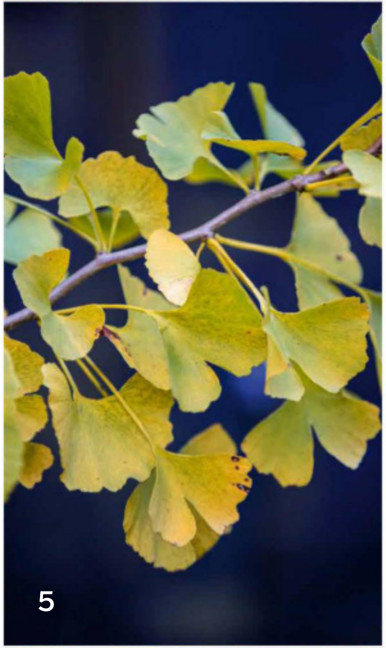
6 *Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri' This dwarf Scots pine responds well to pruning – vital in such a small garden as this, where the lower branches will need to be removed as it grows. 3m x 6m. RHS H7.

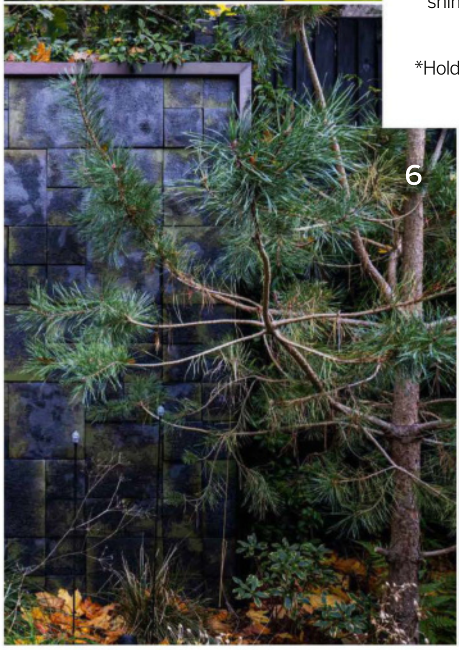
7 *Sesleria* 'Greenlee' Its white flowers age to brown above compact mounds of green leaves. 30 x 30cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

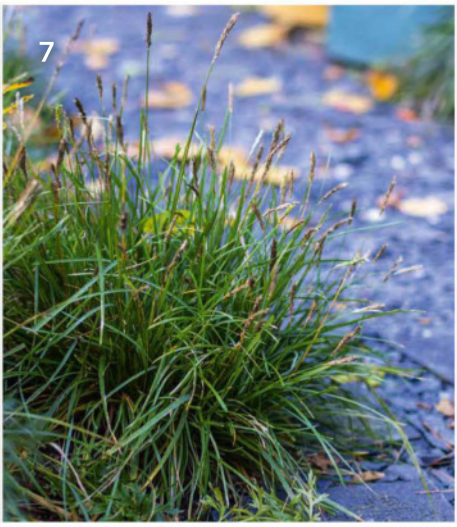
8 *Dryopteris erythrosora* Throws out new fronds of a beautiful shimmering pink colour, which then age to green. Easy to grow in most situations. 75cm x 75cm. AGM*. RHS H4.

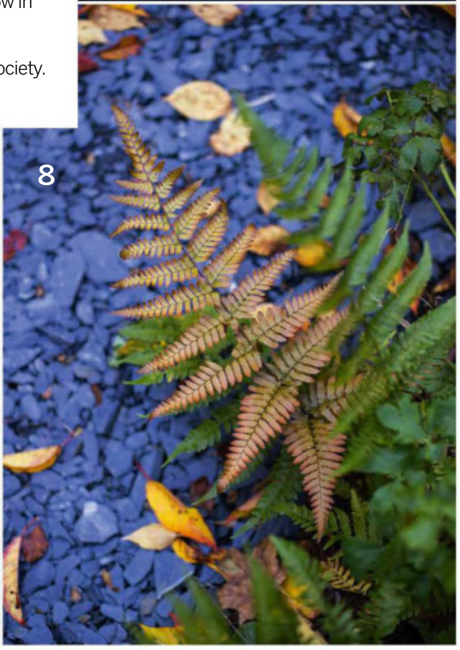
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.











Shooting stars

Designer **Jo Thompson** brings her series on container planting to an end with three stylish displays to see you through the colder months

PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

SCAN HERE
Watch Jo explain this planting scheme in our video. Simply scan the QR code with your phone camera or head to **gardensillustrated.com/pot-for-november**

WILDLIFE BUFFET

This glazed container needs only the simplest of components to inject a mood-boosting shot of colour to counter late autumn and winter's grey skies. The early flowers and later berries of the cotoneasters make this not just a feast for the eyes but an invitation for both pollinators and birds to continue to visit. Even without flowers, the turning colours of the leaves provide drama, heightened by the cornus's show-stopping red stems.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition

Simplicity is everything when it comes to this late-season display. I've used just three plants – all of which have been chosen for their winter forms. Cotoneasters provide fabulous structure and a feeling of movement as they artfully send their stems out to create impressive silhouettes.

Add in the red stems of the cornus and you have everything you need to provide architecture and impact, against a neutral background. The bright-orange berries of *Cotoneaster* x *suecicus* 'Coral Beauty' shine out here; their autumn colours enhanced by the gorgeous scarlets of *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, with its herringbone pattern of stems that are so much easier to admire when spread out from a container than they are on the ground. The horizontals need some verticality as a balance and *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' is the perfect partner in terms of colour and form.

Cultivation and care

All of these plants will tolerate a little shade so this is a pot that will be happy pretty much anywhere. However, it will definitely shine out if you are able to give it a sunny spot. All will need more water when grown in a container. After this season, I will move the cornus out into the wider garden to give it space to grow. Be aware that in England and Wales, it is an offence to plant or cause *Cotoneaster horizontalis* to grow in the wild, so leave that one in the pot.

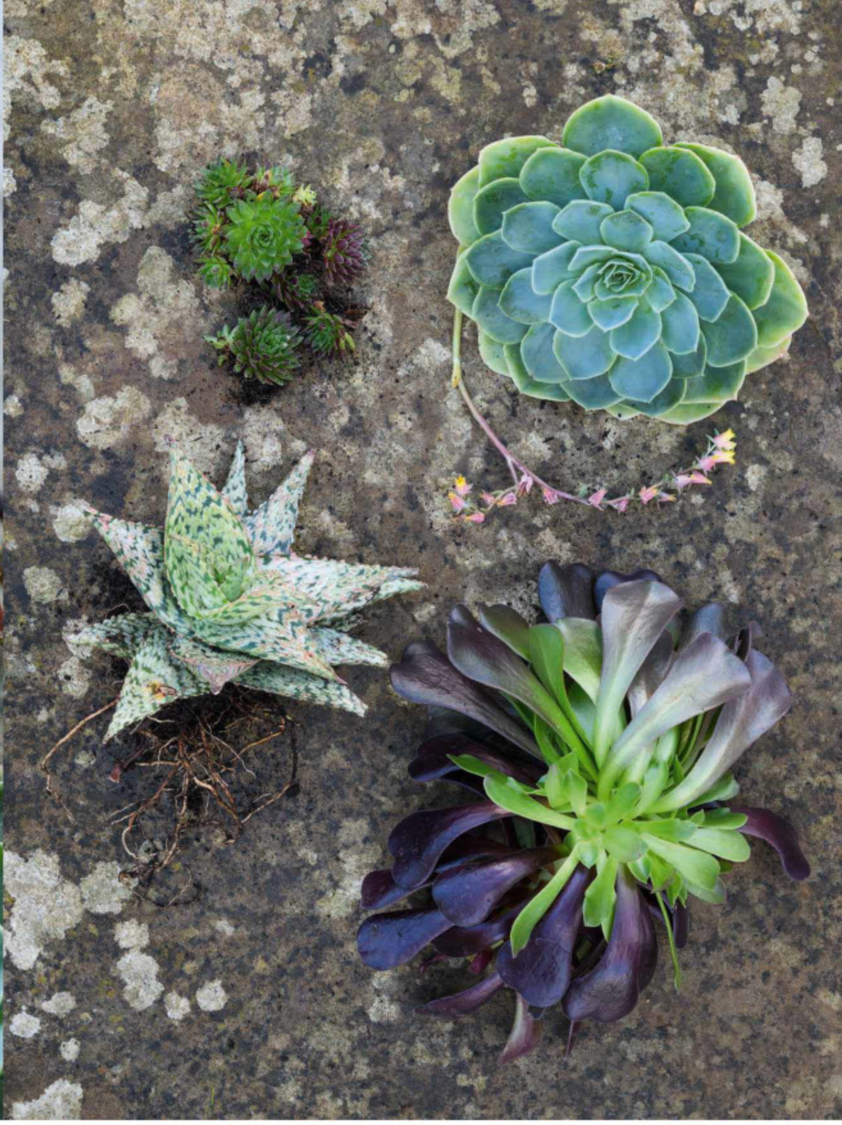
Plants

1 *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' This deciduous, medium-sized shrub has deep-red stems and grey-green, white-margined, narrowly ovate leaves to 10cm in length. Flat heads of creamy white flowers are followed by berries. Height and spread: 3m x 3m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b†.

2 *Cotoneaster* x *suecicus* 'Coral Beauty' An evergreen shrub forming a dense mound of small, glossy, dark-green leaves to 1cm long, and clusters of small, white summer flowers followed by a profusion of bright-orange berries. 1m x 2m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

3 *Cotoneaster horizontalis* Low-growing, spreading deciduous shrub with distinctive, flat, herringbone-patterned sprays of leaves. The leaves are glossy dark green, and then turn orange and red in autumn. Pinkish-white flowers in late spring are followed by red berries. 50cm x 1.8m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.



ARCHITECTURAL TEXTURE

I love a table displaying a collection of succulents: exotic and intriguing, I find the geometry of their forms mesmerising. This bowl takes the idea of a succulent collection one step further by combining a range of them in one vessel. Succulents are a good way of bringing interest to a windowsill or covered area as the winter approaches. Arranged together in a low bowl, these four succulents create a display that looks good from every viewpoint and is an ideal table centrepiece.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
A round bowl is the perfect shape to show off the extraordinary textures of these succulents; the smooth leaves of *Echeveria desmetiana* and *Aeonium* 'Velour' contrasting with the spiky leaves of *Aloe* 'Cleopatra' and *Sempervivum tectorum*.

The subtle shades and tones all work well together: the aeonium's dramatic, deep-purple, almost black, foliage picks up the purples of the houseleek, while in turn its blues pick up the echeveria's almost metallic shades. The aloe does a brilliant job of bringing all these colours together. Including all four plants in an easily portable bowl means that they can be moved at the end of summer from an outside table into the house, and placed on a sunny windowsill where they can continue to be enjoyed. The sempervivums are the foil to the individual architecture of the aeonium, aloe and echeveria, so once you have positioned these in well-drained soil, carefully fill the gaps with the sempervivums.

Cultivation and care
Succulents need a free-draining, gritty compost so use either a cactus compost, or mix in up to 30 per cent grit or fine gravel to a good multi-purpose compost. All these plants need to be kept away from excessive wet, so place this somewhere where you can easily bring it in if longer periods of rain are forecast. A sunny position outside is best in summer. They'll need a sunny position in winter too, but very definitely inside.

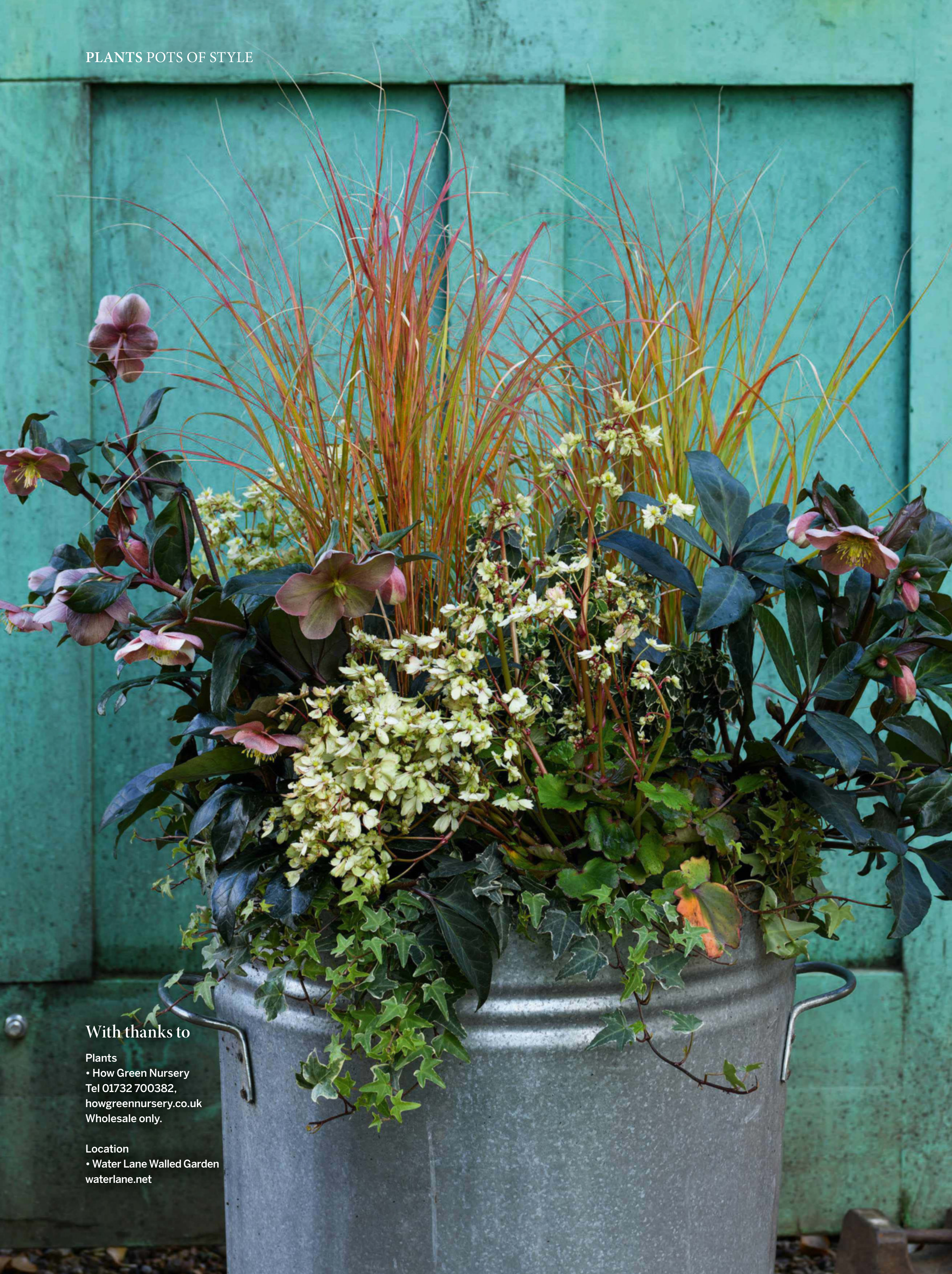
Plants

1 *Aloe* 'Cleopatra' Deep-green leaves with pink spiny margins and pronounced pale-grey spots. It produces tall spikes that hold orange-red flowers. 20cm x 30cm. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.

2 *Sempervivum tectorum* The common houseleek is a vigorous evergreen perennial that quickly forms a mat of clusters of fleshy rosettes. Its leaves are blue-green suffused with reddish-purple. 10cm x 45cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

3 *Echeveria desmetiana* A perennial succulent, forming a low, dense rosette of highly ornamental, thick, fleshy, blue-green leaves with a dense, waxy-white patina. It bears spiked clusters of glowing, rich orange-red, tubular flowers. 12cm x 12cm. RHS H3.

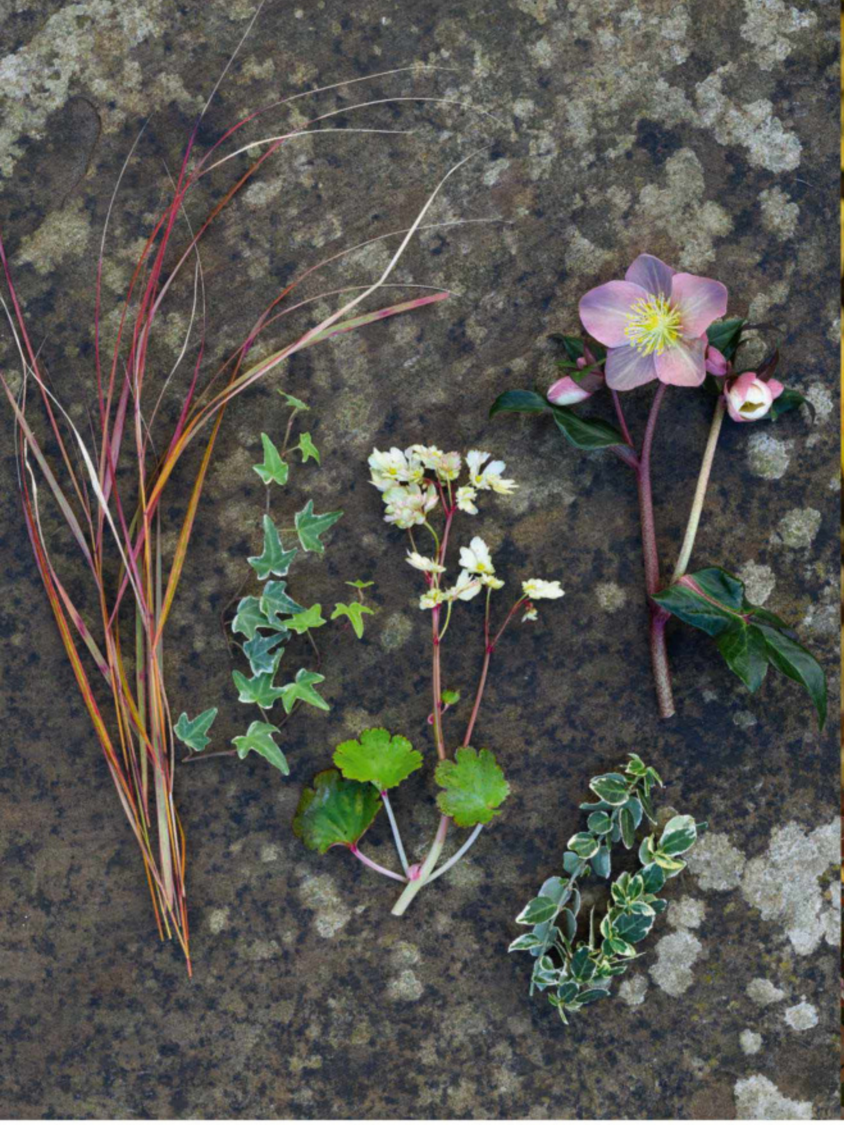
4 *Aeonium* 'Velour' An upright, evergreen, succulent perennial or sub-shrub. At the end of its branching stems it produces rosettes of soft green and dark purple leaves. 1m x 1m. RHS H1C.



With thanks to

Plants
• How Green Nursery
Tel 01732 700382,
howgreennursery.co.uk
Wholesale only.

Location
• Water Lane Walled Garden
waterlane.net



AUTUMN SHADES

Spotting an old steel dustbin that had been discarded behind a hydrangea-clad wall, I set myself the task of cheering up this ugly duckling of a container, using the caramels, toffees and sticky apples of November's Bonfire Night as inspiration. By picking up a few of the tones within the leaves of a *Hydrangea petiolaris* growing on the brick wall behind the bin, I was able to bring this container out from its hiding place to centre stage and transform it into a beautiful autumnal feature.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition
Scale is everything when you have a container of this size; the planting's main components need to have some presence about them. The bin itself inspired the choice of hellebore, the pewter-green leaves and pink flowers of which tone so well with the container's metallic grey shades. It's the perfect plant for this destination: its colours sit so well against grey, while the solidity of both its flowers and leaves provide the bulk needed here.

The saxifrage's flowers last throughout autumn and have good matching shades of pink and cream, making this mounded plant a perfect partner to the hellebore. Both have stems with hints of pinky-brown, creating a good link to the orange-streaked leaves of *Anemanthele lessoniana* 'Sirocco', which turn orange-brown over winter, and to the brick wall and hydrangea leaves in the background.

These mouth-watering toffees and caramels need green to balance them – the variegated *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety' and *Hedera helix* 'Little Silver' do this perfectly, bringing light as well as colour to the mix.

Cultivation and care
This arrangement is perfectly happy in a container for a few years, as long as the compost is replaced and the euonymus is kept trimmed. Ensure that the drainage is good as the saxifrage does not like sitting in wet soil.

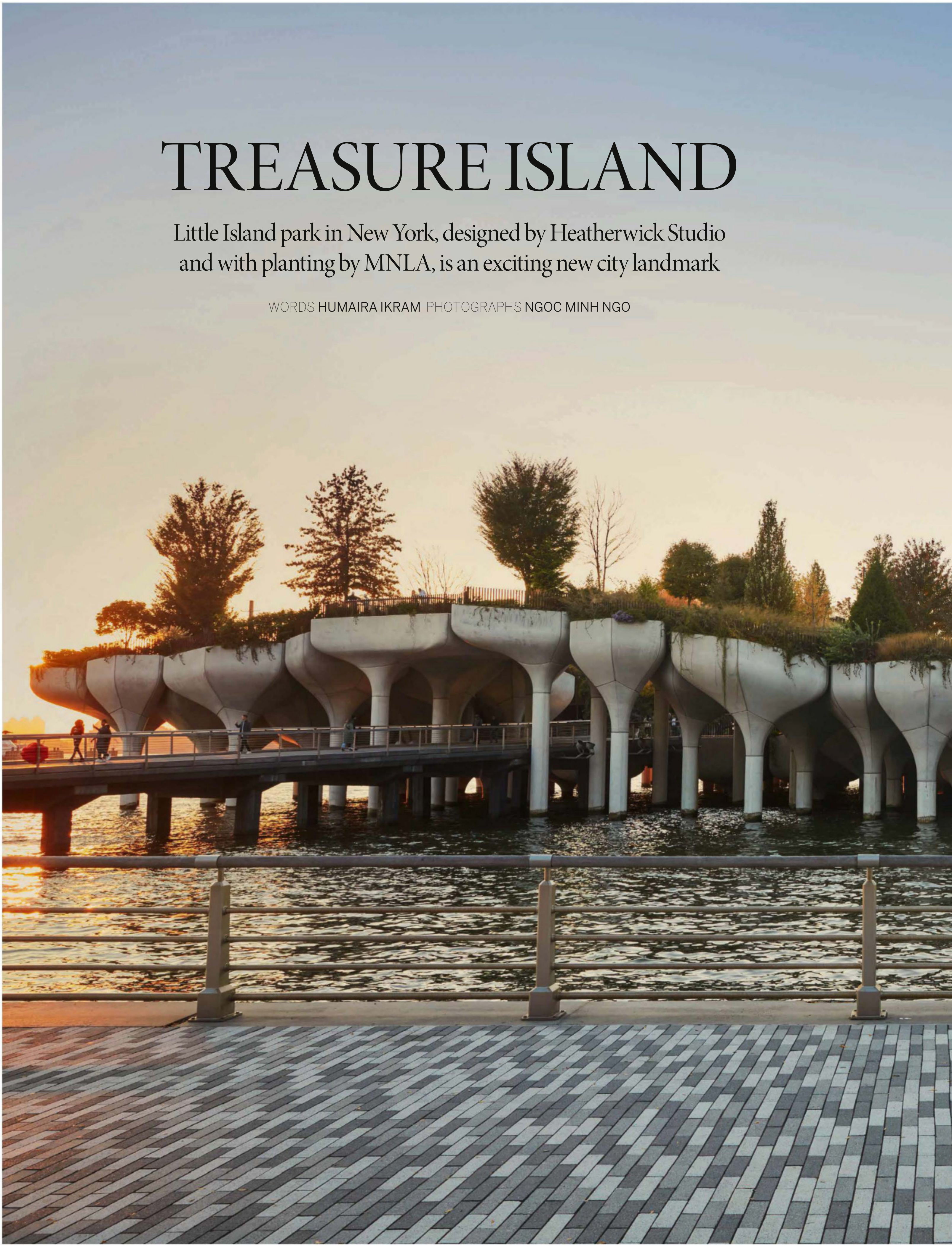
Plants

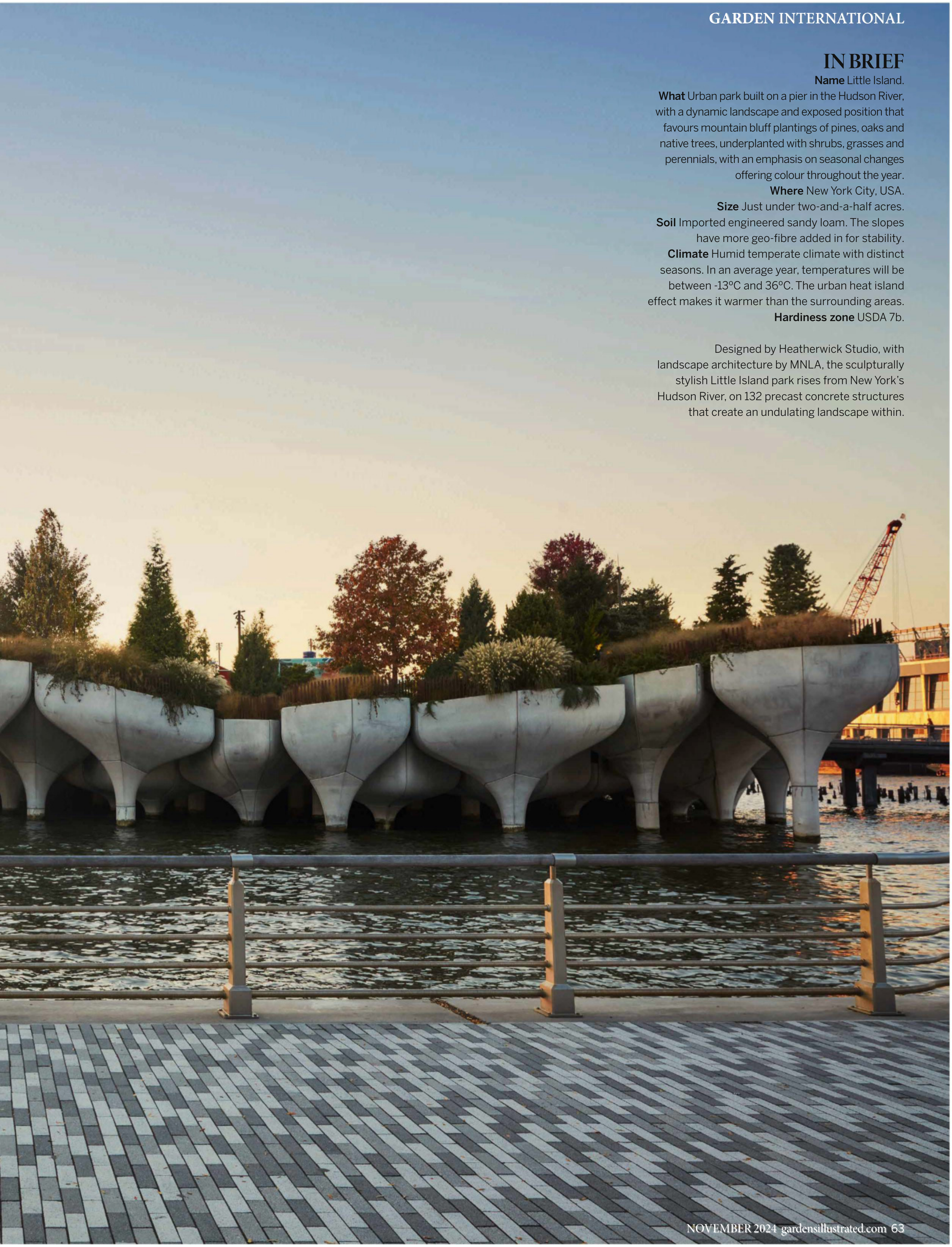
1 *Anemanthele lessoniana* 'Sirocco' A useful semi-evergreen perennial grass. 90cm x 75cm. RHS H4, USDA 8b-10b.
2 *Hedera helix* 'Little Silver' An evergreen trailing plant with cream-edged leaves. 30cm x 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
3 *Saxifraga* Dancing Pixies Tini (= 'Sh 1914') A dwarf, mound-forming perennial with masses of star-shaped, pink-edged white flowers with yellow centres. 25cm x 60cm. RHS H4.
4 *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Gaiety' A small, bushy, evergreen shrub that will happily climb. Emerald-green leaves with creamy-white margins, which can become tinged pink in the winter. 1m x 1.5m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
5 *Helleborus* x *ballardiae* HGC Maestro (= 'Coseh 890') Creamy-pink saucers of flowers become darker as they age. The leathery foliage is dark green with pewter-grey tones. 45cm x 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

TREASURE ISLAND

Little Island park in New York, designed by Heatherwick Studio and with planting by MNLA, is an exciting new city landmark

WORDS **HUMAIRA IKRAM** PHOTOGRAPHS **NGOC MINH NGO**

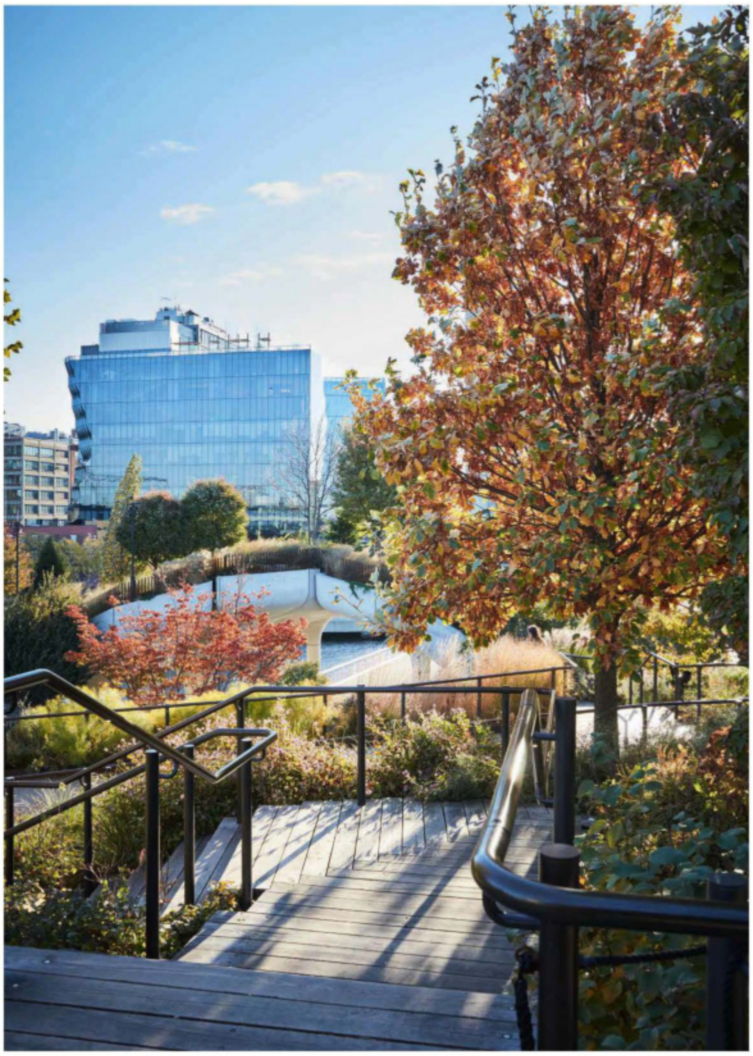


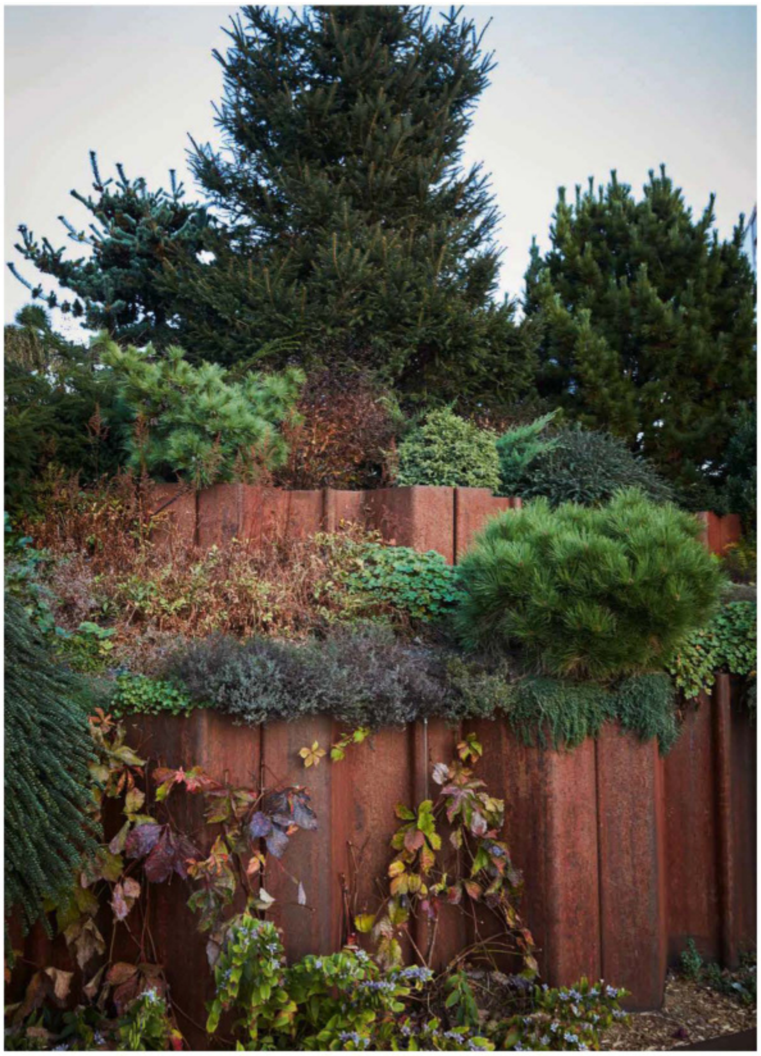


IN BRIEF

Name Little Island.
What Urban park built on a pier in the Hudson River, with a dynamic landscape and exposed position that favours mountain bluff plantings of pines, oaks and native trees, underplanted with shrubs, grasses and perennials, with an emphasis on seasonal changes offering colour throughout the year.
Where New York City, USA.
Size Just under two-and-a-half acres.
Soil Imported engineered sandy loam. The slopes have more geo-fibre added in for stability.
Climate Humid temperate climate with distinct seasons. In an average year, temperatures will be between -13°C and 36°C. The urban heat island effect makes it warmer than the surrounding areas.
Hardiness zone USDA 7b.

Designed by Heatherwick Studio, with landscape architecture by MNLA, the sculpturally stylish Little Island park rises from New York's Hudson River, on 132 precast concrete structures that create an undulating landscape within.





Take a stroll through New York's vibrant streets and you're soon enveloped by an unmistakable sense of familiarity. The Brooklyn Bridge, the towering Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty – the city's landmarks are etched into our consciousness through countless films. But now a new gem has emerged – an oasis on the Hudson River known as Little Island, which offers a unique blend of nature and artistry.

This new public park and arts venue occupies the space left by three of the old Chelsea Piers. In the early 20th century, these served as the main port for the Cunard White Star Line, where the ill-fated RMS *Titanic* was headed. In the 1970s, one of them was transformed into a community space. In 2012, when Hurricane Sandy destroyed it beyond repair, a generous $260 million investment from Barry Diller and the Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation offered the Hudson River Park Trust the opportunity to transform the space completely, to create a public park and outdoor performance space that would captivate visitors. A sanctuary from the city, providing space for relaxation, sheltered from the windswept and exposed environment on the Hudson.

UK-based Heatherwick Studio answered the brief magnificently with a striking, sculptural design that rises gracefully from the Hudson River atop 132 tulip-shaped, precast concrete structures. The undulating landscape includes an outdoor amphitheatre, a smaller performance space, a large open plaza and central lawn, woven through with sinuous paths that offer accessible routes to all parts of the park.

But what turns this spectacular structure into a wonderful oasis of calm is the planting prowess of landscape architect and urban designer Signe Nielsen, principal founder of MNLA, whose expertise and vision have been instrumental in shaping Little Island's lush landscapes. Even now, three years after the park opened, her enthusiasm for the project is palpable. "Quite honestly," she says, "this is may be surprising to say, but when I was first hired for the project I had no idea how extraordinary it was going to be."

Heatherwick's structure, which Signe likens to a dried leaf floating on water, rises in three of its four corners. This presented her with the challenge of designing a planting scheme suited to a variety of microclimates that would create a unified feel when viewed from the central bowl. The answer is what she terms her 'bloom sweep', a seasonally changing colour palette that ties the four quadrants visually together and which is linked to temperature. Starting with cool, pastel colours in spring, the colours become increasingly intense throughout summer, until more muted tones dominate ▷

To continue turn to page 69

Above left Steps made from black locust lead down from the park's highest point passing a native *Quercus bicolor* underplanted with both shade- and sun-loving plants.

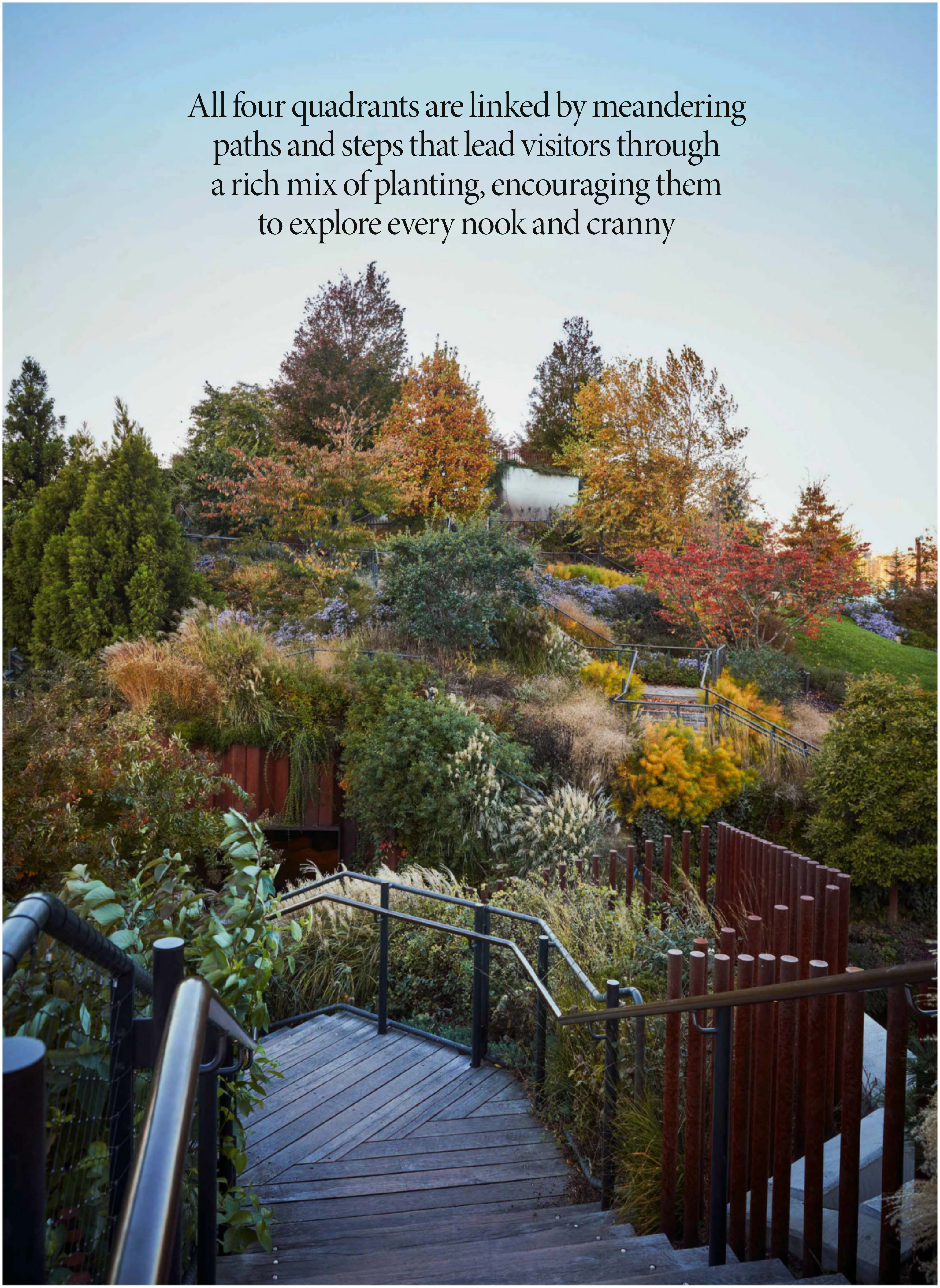
Above right In the northeast zone, Signe has used more evergreens, such as *Pinus mugo* and *Pinus strobus* 'Niagara Falls', to provide a buffer from cold north winds and minimise traffic noise. Evergreen shrubs along with climbers and spillers, including *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* Red Wall (= 'Troki'), *Cotoneaster adpressus* 'Little Gem' and *Thymus serpyllum* 'Elfin', fill the spaces between the Corten steel retaining walls.

Right The large paved plaza, known as the Play Ground, has only limited planting. Airy *Panicum virgatum* 'Squaw' lines the steps in the foreground. High above, tall trees, including *Parrotia persica* 'Ruby Vase', *Quercus robur* Fastigiata Group, *Zelkova serrata* Green Vase (= 'Flekova') and *Koelreuteria paniculata*, line the route to the Southeast Overlook.

WHITNEY
WHITNEY
WHITNEY

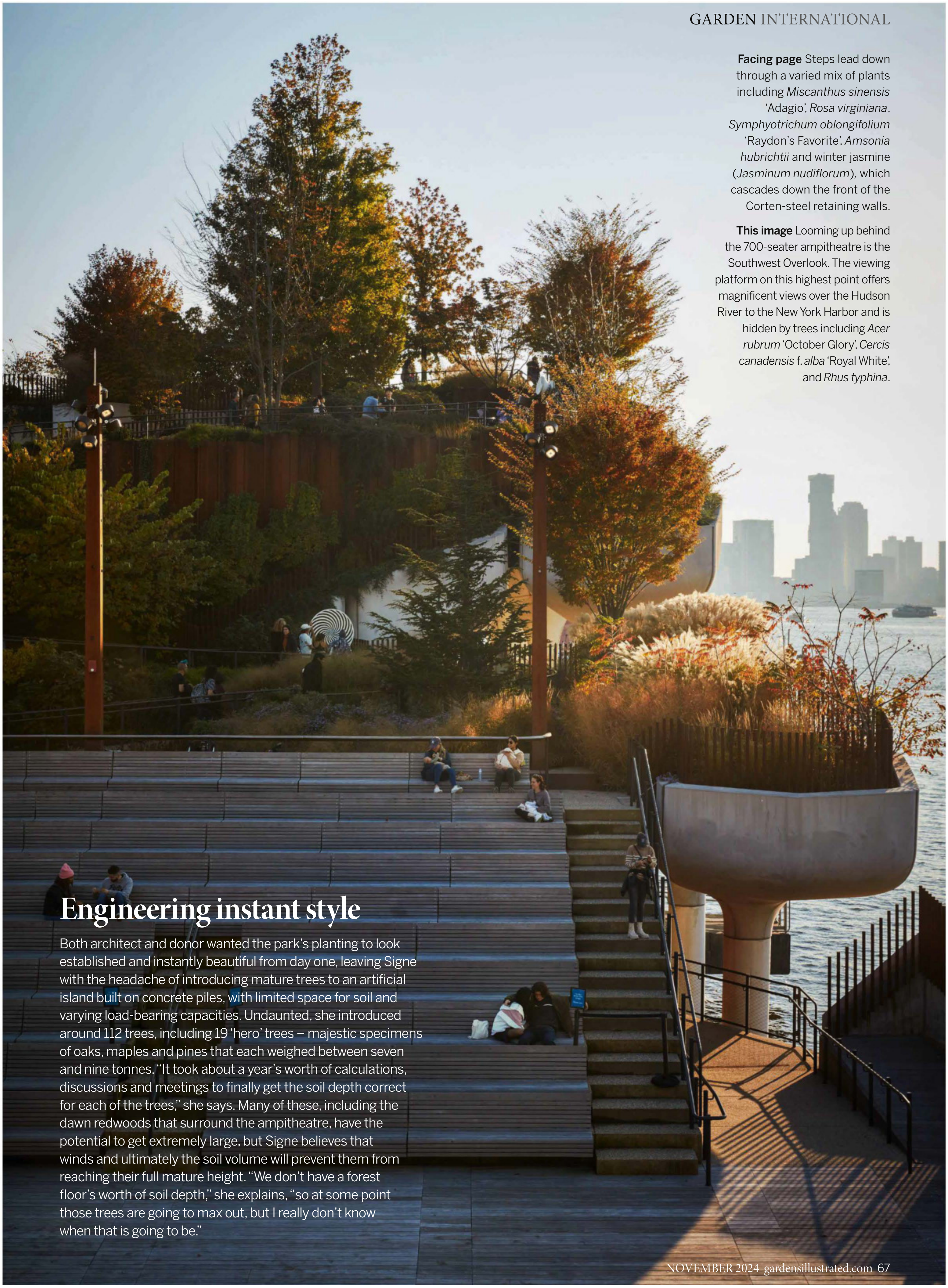
Starting with cool, pastel colours in spring, the colours become increasingly intense throughout summer, until more muted tones dominate in autumn

All four quadrants are linked by meandering paths and steps that lead visitors through a rich mix of planting, encouraging them to explore every nook and cranny



Facing page Steps lead down through a varied mix of plants including *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Adagio', *Rosa virginiana*, *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* 'Raydon's Favorite', *Amsonia hubrichtii* and winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), which cascades down the front of the Corten-steel retaining walls.

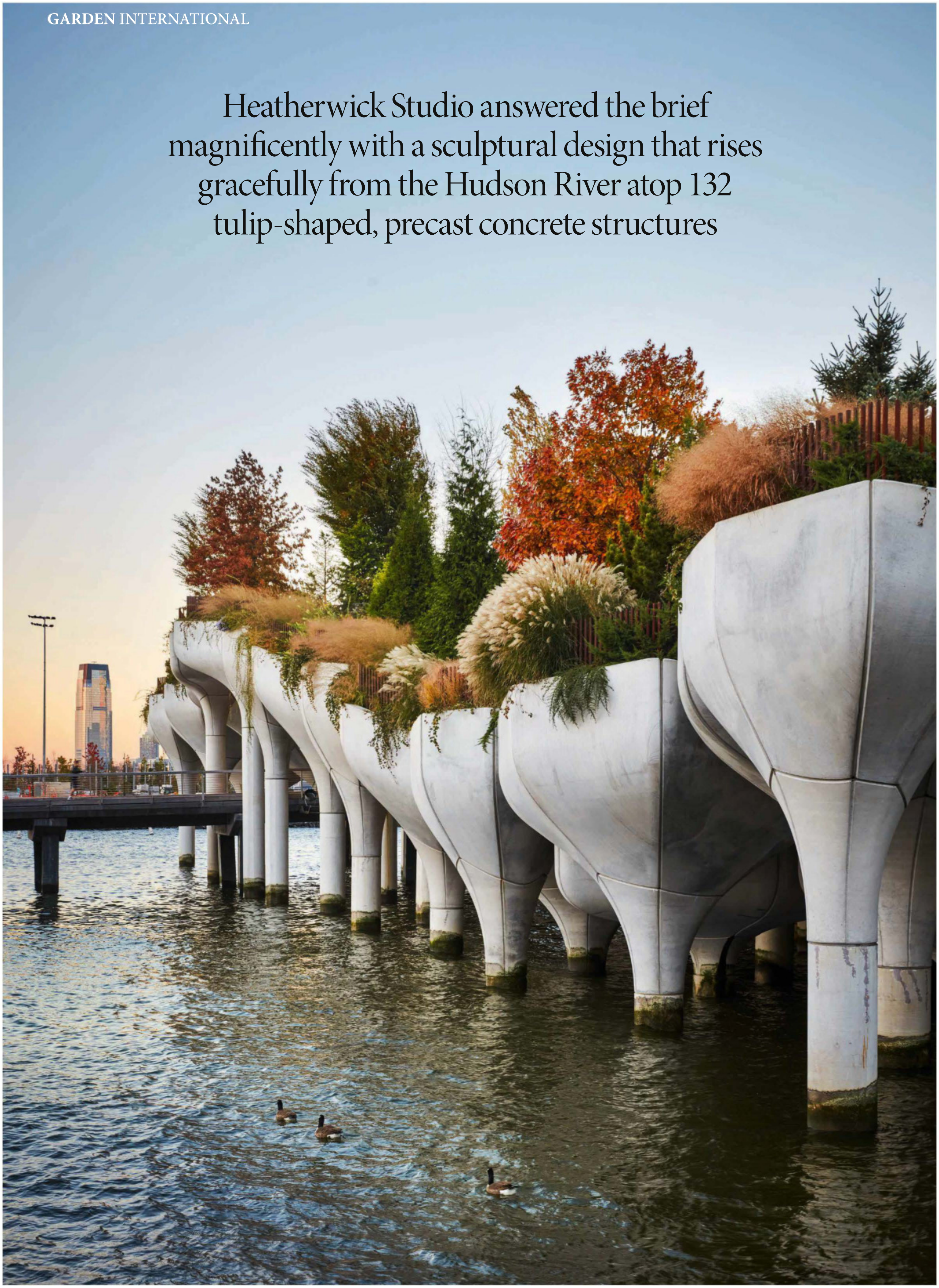
This image Looming up behind the 700-seater ampitheatre is the Southwest Overlook. The viewing platform on this highest point offers magnificent views over the Hudson River to the New York Harbor and is hidden by trees including *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory', *Cercis canadensis* f. *alba* 'Royal White', and *Rhus typhina*.

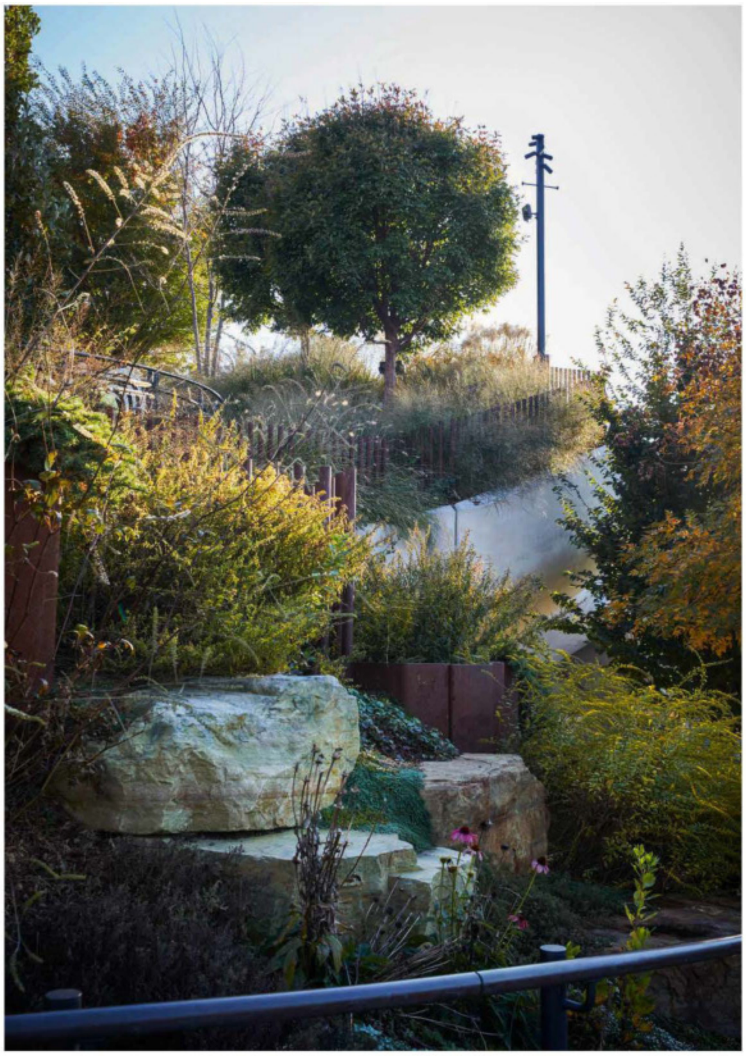


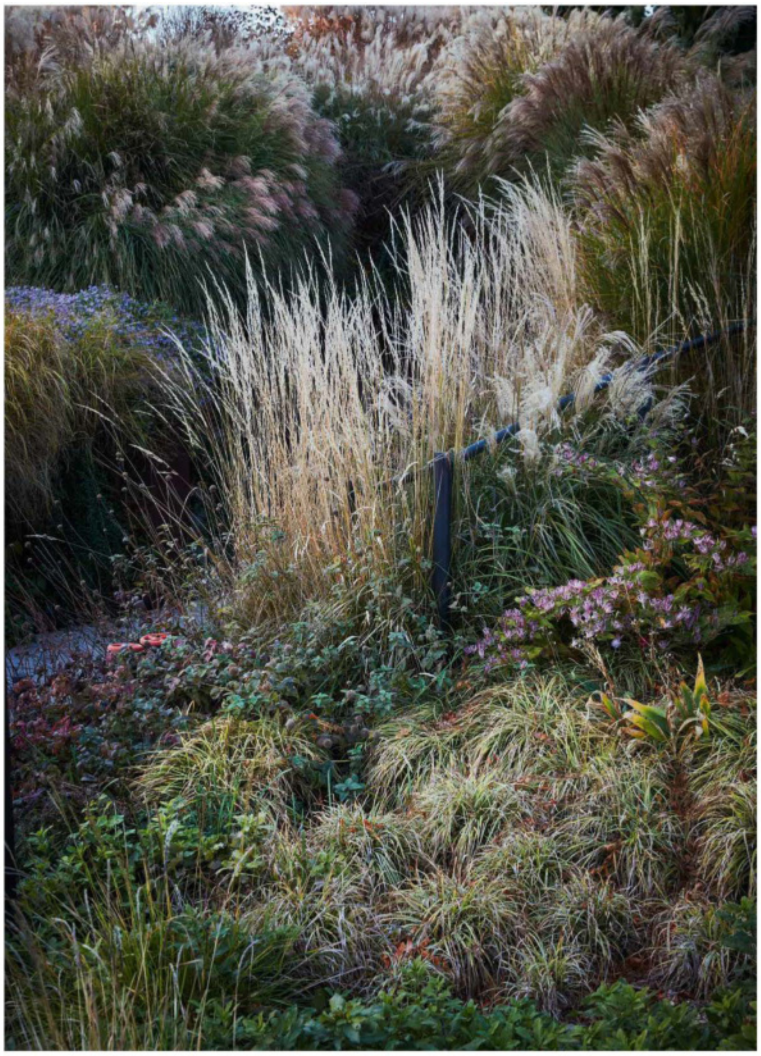
Engineering instant style

Both architect and donor wanted the park's planting to look established and instantly beautiful from day one, leaving Signe with the headache of introducing mature trees to an artificial island built on concrete piles, with limited space for soil and varying load-bearing capacities. Undaunted, she introduced around 112 trees, including 19 'hero' trees – majestic specimens of oaks, maples and pines that each weighed between seven and nine tonnes. "It took about a year's worth of calculations, discussions and meetings to finally get the soil depth correct for each of the trees," she says. Many of these, including the dawn redwoods that surround the ampitheatre, have the potential to get extremely large, but Signe believes that winds and ultimately the soil volume will prevent them from reaching their full mature height. "We don't have a forest floor's worth of soil depth," she explains, "so at some point those trees are going to max out, but I really don't know when that is going to be."

Heatherwick Studio answered the brief magnificently with a sculptural design that rises gracefully from the Hudson River atop 132 tulip-shaped, precast concrete structures







▷ in autumn. There are also distinctive colour palettes within the four quadrants. On the sun-baked Northwest Overlook, which faces south and has fewer trees, Signe has used some of the park's hottest colours, including rich-red *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' and bright-orange *Helenium autumnale* 'Adios', alongside many plants with richly coloured foliage, such as heucheras and sedums. In the southeast quadrant, close to the small performance space, she has created an area she calls the Moon Garden, filled with only white plants, from white-flowered crape myrtle in spring to white-barked silver birch in winter. Her favourite area, however, is the Southwest Overlook, affectionately known as 'Signe's mountain', which at an elevation of almost 19m is the highest point in the park, offering stunning views over the Hudson River. Facing north, this hillside sits in its own shadow, allowing for shadier, woodland-style planting.

All four quadrants are linked by meandering paths and steps that lead visitors through a rich mix of planting, encouraging them to explore every nook and cranny of this dynamic landscape. Signe, a former ballet dancer, wanted the interplay of plants to evoke the flow of movement between dancers, something she has achieved with aplomb. Across the park, she has used tens of thousands of different plants, including around 249 species of perennials, 83 species of grasses, 60 species of bulbs, 80 species of shrubs and 42 species of trees, including junipers, cherries, cercis and conifers. Almost all of these were planted over a ten-month period starting in March 2020, with a dedicated team planting up to 5,000 plants a week throughout the height of the Covid pandemic. And in this landscape designed not just for beauty but also for biodiversity, Signe has included a huge selection of native and non-native plants that provide well-considered habitat niches and food sources for wildlife.

Maintaining this lush sanctuary is now the responsibility of the park's head of horticulture, Orrin Sheehan, and his small but dedicated garden team. Their seasonal routine begins with early cutbacks in January, followed by lawn care and plant maintenance in the warmer months. And throughout the year, one enjoyable aspect of their work is interacting with the many visitors who flock to the park eager to learn more about the planting. "There is nowhere to hide from the questions," says Orrin. "But we are advocates for the space. The feedback we get from people really puts a smile on your face." ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION
Address Pier 55 in Hudson River Park, West 13th Street, New York, NY 10014, USA. **Web** littleisland.org
Open Daily, 6am-11pm. Find out more about Signe Nielsen's work at **mnlandscape.com**

Facing page Grasses, such as feathery *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yaku-jima', *Panicum virgatum* 'Squaw', *Panicum virgatum* 'Rotstrahlbusch' and *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent', make up the bulk of the planting at the park's edges. As you move into the centre of the park, the percentage of perennials gradually increases.

Above left The bright-yellow flowers of *Solidago caesia* and *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks', stand out against a cluster of quartzite boulders that help to retain soil.

Above right Tall grasses, such as *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' and *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' add a feeling of enclosure as you climb the paths, while the grass-like *Carex* 'Silver Sceptre' and perennials, including purple aster *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* 'October Skies', *Monarda bradburyana*, *Tricyrtis* 'Sinonome', add colour and texture at ground level.

WAMBUI IPPOLITO

The award-winning landscape designer and horticulturist on her Kenyan childhood, feeling a strong connection with the land and her desire to beautify cities

WORDS PAULA McWATERS PORTRAIT RACHEL WARNE

In 2021, Kenyan-born Wambui Ippolito was named by *Veranda* magazine as one of '11 revolutionary female landscape designers and architects everyone should know', an accolade she attributes to her roots. "I believe it is because I have an optic outside of anything western European or American," she says. "There is a long tradition of gardening in the UK – a certain template that is echoed in America too. But I take a very different approach; growing up in East Africa, the landscape is so vast, it gives you a panoramic view."

Based in New York, Wambui practises mostly on the East Coast and is currently working on large estates in the Westchester area, north of the city. She is also in demand on the lecture circuit and as a consultant helping institutions and museums to develop horticultural programming. "There is something in me that wants to continue to explore, to learn and to grow," she says. Chairing the Society of Garden Designers' spring conference earlier this year, she was praised for her enquiring approach. "I wanted answers from the audience: how are young people thinking? What effect is Instagram having on landscape design? How can we work more sustainably in a real way? It became very inclusive and that's something I think I am good at: bringing people together."

Nature was always part of Wambui's DNA. Much of her childhood was spent outside – born in Nairobi, she grew up in the Rift Valley, on her family farm in Uasin Gishu, where she had freedom to explore and felt a strong connection with the land. "I loved that life – just walking around, looking at plants and picking fruit and berries," she says.

> I WAS TRYING TO BE WHAT I'D CALL 'A SERIOUS PERSON', BUT REALLY, ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS TO BE OUTSIDE

Her mother, a diplomat, is an avid gardener. "She would take me with her on plant-buying trips to visit an influential man called Peter Greensmith. He was a British ex-soldier who became an expert horticulturist, responsible for turning Nairobi into the green city it is. My mother would always encourage me to pick out a plant for myself. One of the last ones I chose as a child was a bougainvillea, which is still growing at my mother's property now."

When Wambui was 14, the family moved to Washington DC, where she went to high school. "I also went to school in Costa Rica for a while – we did a lot of travelling." Later, she studied international development, and in her twenties worked as a democracy consultant in Washington. "I was trying to be what I'd call 'a serious person', but really and truly, all I wanted to do was to be outside."

Ten years ago, living in Staten Island, New York, with her American husband and new baby daughter, Wambui finally made the move. Returning to corporate life held zero appeal, so she began volunteering at Snug Harbor Botanical Garden and then enrolled at the New York Botanical Garden School of Professional Horticulture.

After finishing her studies, Wambui cut her teeth at Martha Stewart's garden in Bedford, New York. "I couldn't have had a better start – she has great plant collections and we had to follow the highest standards of horticulture." Shortly afterwards, Wambui moved on to a work placement at David Letterman's estate. "Equally wonderful but in a different way," she says. Focusing on native plants used ornamentally, it reminded Wambui of her home in Kenya and the plants that grew wild there.

Wambui has since been making her mark. In 2021, she won a Gold Award and Best in Show at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Flower Show, and a year later she was invited to design a courtyard garden at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. "I believe I was the first black woman in America to design a permanent garden for a major botanical institution," she says.

In Nairobi, Wambui has taken on the care of her mother's garden, one of the few remaining pockets of old, original forestland in a city that has seen huge change. "When I was growing up, this was such a languid, quiet town, so beautiful and green. Then we had this population explosion and many trees were cut down to build housing. It's precious and I want to preserve it forever by caring for the native trees and plants that are here, and adding more."

Much as Wambui enjoys creating gardens, she has wider ambitions. "I would like to work with cities and municipalities around the world to help beautify them, and to reforest large tracts of land that have been lost to deforestation. I believe the future is there. At the same time, we could create more jobs for young people – and particularly women – by setting up nurseries where native plants can be propagated. It could make a big, big difference." ◻

USEFUL INFORMATION

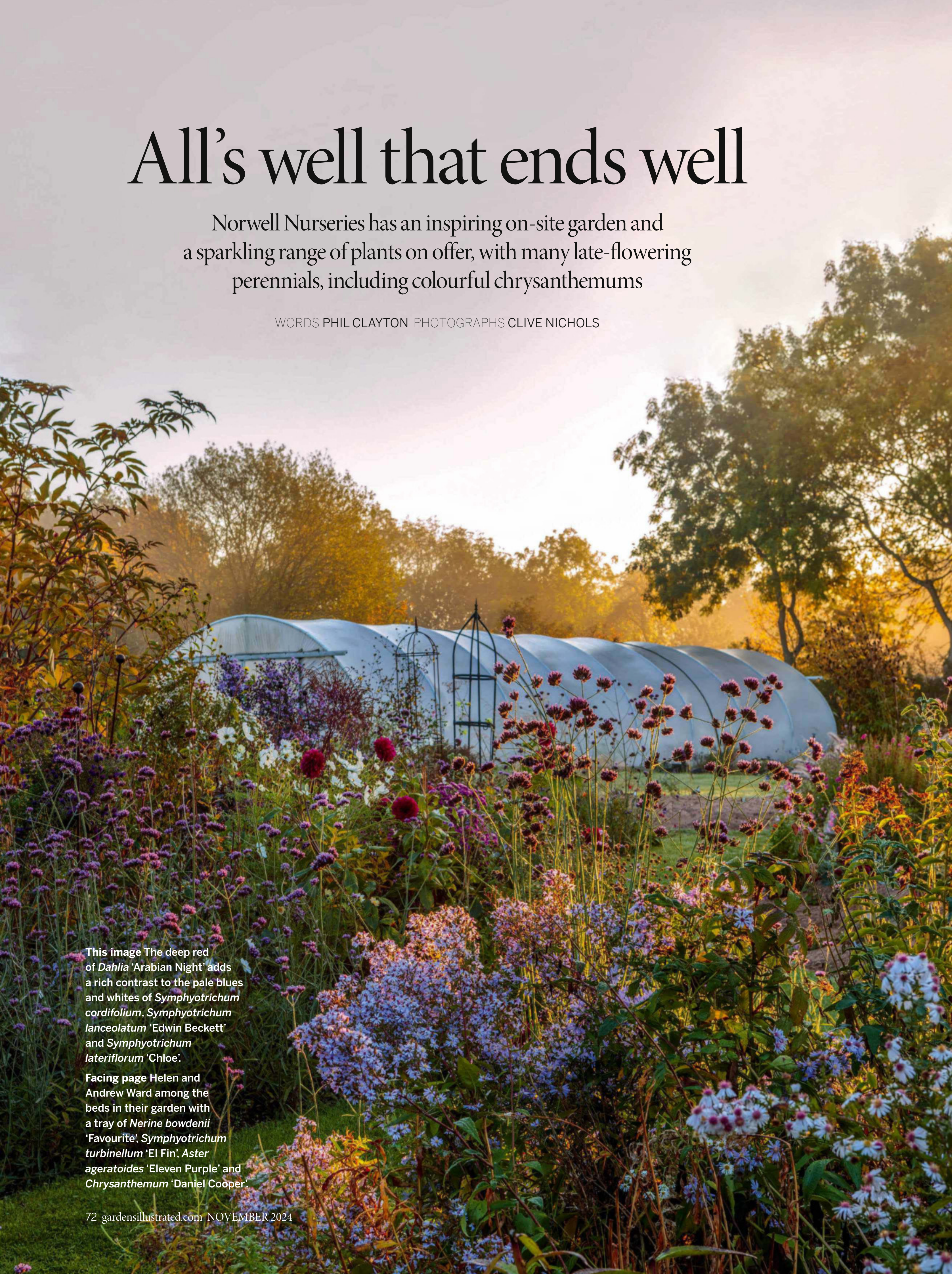
Find out more about Wambui Ippolito's work at **wambuidesign.com**

Wambui is currently writing a book that will highlight the influence that immigrants' gardens have had on the American landscape. Provisionally titled *Terra Nova*, it will be published by Timber Press in 2026.

All's well that ends well

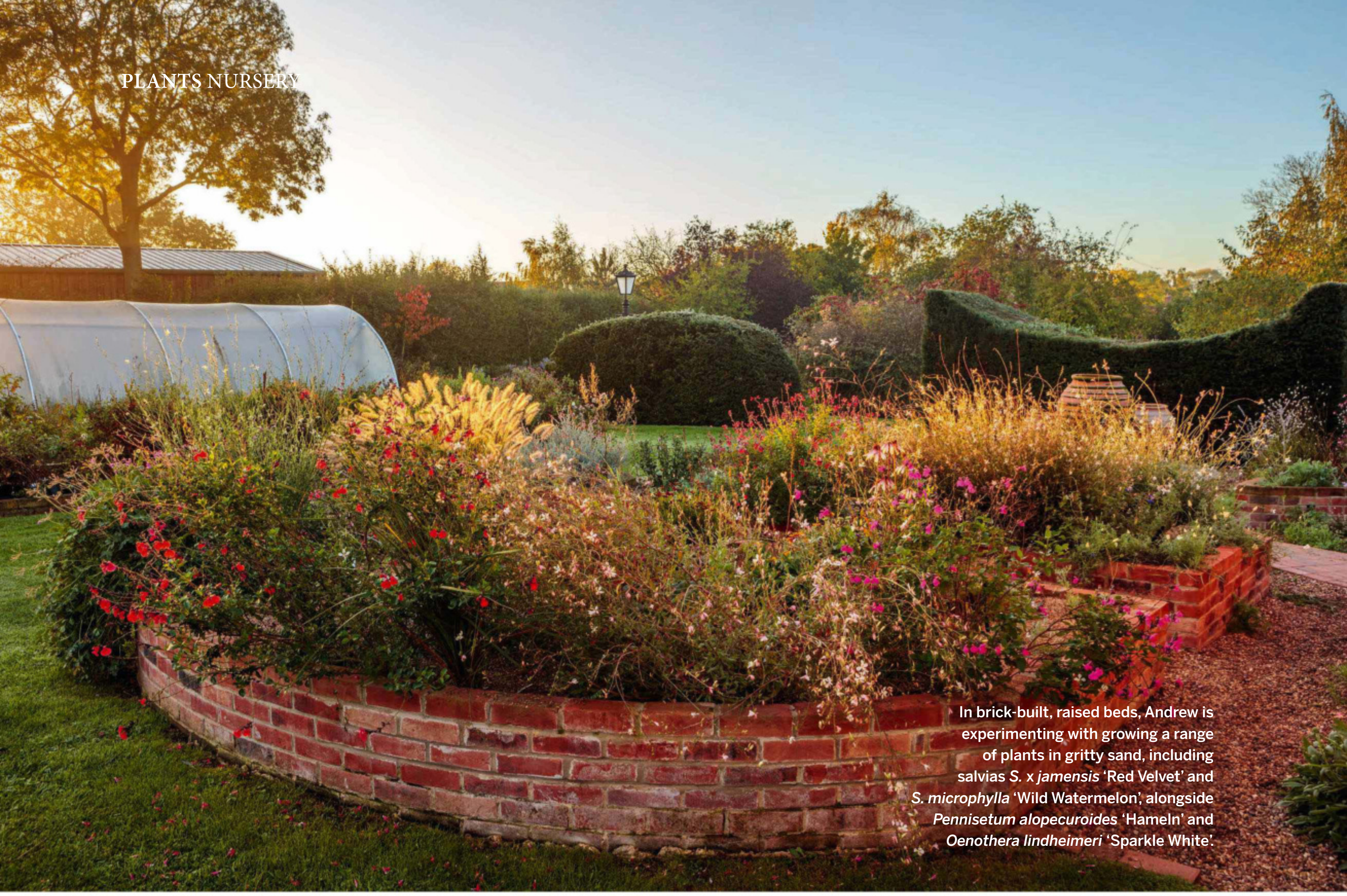
Norwell Nurseries has an inspiring on-site garden and a sparkling range of plants on offer, with many late-flowering perennials, including colourful chrysanthemums

WORDS **PHIL CLAYTON** PHOTOGRAPHS **CLIVE NICHOLS**



This image The deep red of *Dahlia* 'Arabian Night' adds a rich contrast to the pale blues and whites of *Symphyotrichum cordifolium*, *Symphyotrichum lanceolatum* 'Edwin Beckett' and *Symphyotrichum lateriflorum* 'Chloe'.

Facing page Helen and Andrew Ward among the beds in their garden with a tray of *Nerine bowdenii* 'Favourite', *Symphyotrichum turbinellum* 'El Fin', *Aster ageratoides* 'Eleven Purple' and *Chrysanthemum* 'Daniel Cooper'.



In brick-built, raised beds, Andrew is experimenting with growing a range of plants in gritty sand, including salvias *S.* x *jamensis* 'Red Velvet' and *S. microphylla* 'Wild Watermelon', alongside *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' and *Oenothera lindheimeri* 'Sparkle White'.

As any good gardener knows, September and October can be among the most glorious months of the year. But November? and Helen Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries are enthusiasts of this month, too. "I'm particularly keen on plants that make the coldest, darkest part of the year feel as short as possible, so there are lots here that look great late, and early, in the growing season," says Andrew.

The couple came to Norwell in 1994. It had always been Andrew's dream to start a nursery, and the south-facing, sloping two-acre field set behind a row of cottages in the pretty Nottinghamshire village offered great potential, despite heavy clay soil, and brambles that needed clearing before the rewards of growing plants could be enjoyed. The site also proved to be a potent frost pocket. "In the bitter winter of 2010, we had quite a shock, enduring five nights of -18°C and one of -20°C. That's cold enough to kill bone-hardy plants if they are growing in pots. As a result, we tell visitors that if a plant grows here it will be hardy more or less anywhere in the UK," says Andrew.

Among their diverse selection of plants is the National Plant Collection of hardy chrysanthemums, many of the 160 or so selections peaking in nursery beds and the garden from August into autumn (depending on the cultivar), with some still flowering in the second week of December if there hasn't been too much freezing rain.

The pair's passion for these plants began 30 years ago, when they were given *Chrysanthemum* 'Innocence' by Helen's mum."Before that, I'd only known the chrysanths my grandfather grew – the big exhibition types that I found a bit inelegant," says Andrew. "They were a hassle, as they had to be lifted because they weren't hardy. You wouldn't see them, as they were always covered in paper bags to protect them from earwigs. But 'Innocence' was a hardy chrysanth, which flowers after the asters. For most people, when the asters have finished, that's the end of their gardening year. So to get colour into December is incredibly important."

"They go on for so long," says Helen. "Some of the earliest, such as double golden-yellow *Chrysanthemum* 'Ruby Raynor', start flowering in July, while others, such as 'Innocence' don't get into their stride until October. There's quite a lot of variation in the flower form – they can be single, double, pompom, short, tall. Some are beautifully scented of citrus and honey, such as 'Folk Song', and they make excellent cut flowers, lasting a long time in water when there is little else to cut in the garden."

Having ordered from nurseries on the continent some cultivars not previously available in the UK, including 'Pomegranate' and 'Eugens Bitterschokolade', and by breeding their own, mostly from seedlings – a process that can take ten years – the pair eventually had enough for a National Collection. It is known as a 'dispersed' collection, combined with two others, curated by Judy Barker in Hertfordshire and Hill Close Gardens Trust in Warwickshire. "The idea is that if one of us has a disaster, another can provide plants again," explains Andrew.

Helen and Andrew say that hardy chrysanthemums are best grown next to grasses (especially pennisetums and miscanthus) and autumn crocuses, such as sternbergias, which tend to flower at the same time. They point out that they need to be grown in a spot of the garden that is still in sun in November, in order to benefit pollinators: "The flowers are often covered in butterflies and bees in November, but they need the sun's warmth."

Helen looks after the collection. Among her favourites are *C.* 'Capel Manor', with yellow flowers late in the season and ▷

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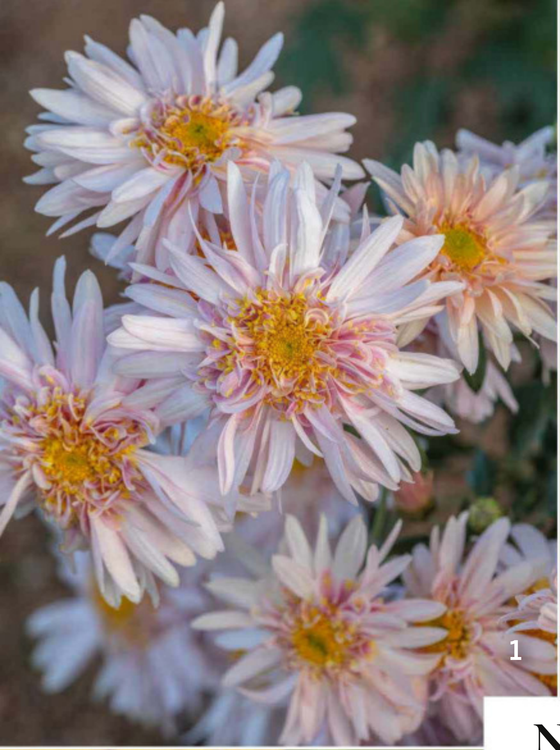
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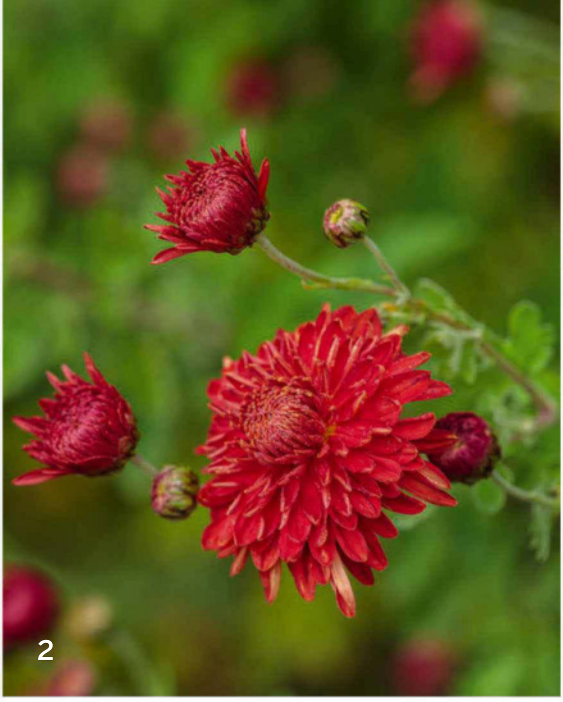
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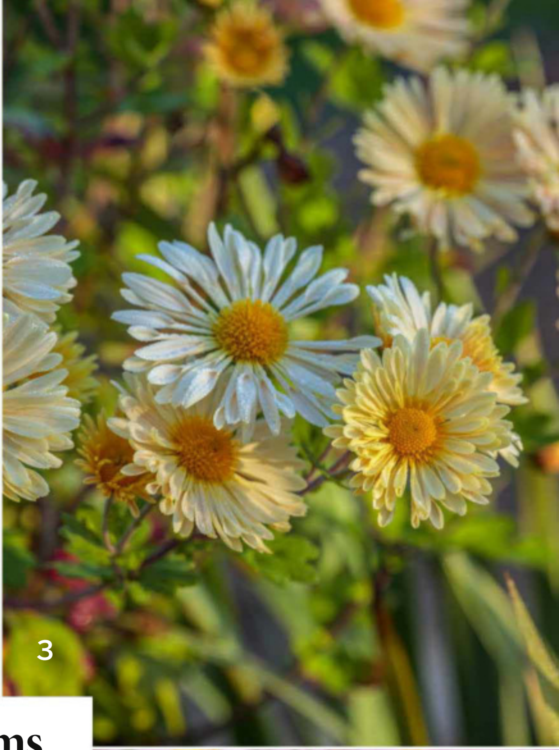
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Norwell's top 16 chrysanthemums

1 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Barbara Lambert'** Beautiful soft pink, anemone-centred flowers that age paler, with a rich-pink centre. A strong grower for a sunny, well-drained site. Bred at Norwell and named for Helen's late mum. Flower size 5cm across. Height and spread: 90cm x 60cm. RHS H4.

2 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Chelsea Physic Garden'** An exceptional selection, flowering late October into November with double red flowers and petals with coppery reverses. Excellent for sun and any soil. Flower size 5cm. 75cm x 40cm. RHS H6.

3 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Mary'** Beautiful quilled, creamy, semi-double flowers. It opens in September but carries into October and sometimes November. Grows best in a well-drained and sunny site. 70cm x 40cm. RHS H4.

4 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Gelbe Spinne'** One of the few hardy chrysanthemum with a profusion of spider-type petals in the flower. A pale lemon colour starts in October. Needs some support but worth the effort. Flower size 7cm across. 60cm x 60cm. RHS H4.

5 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Carmine Blush'** A lovely soft pink-carmine, single flower. Good on improved clay. The flowers open darker and age softer. Ideal for the front of a border. Flower size 4cm. 45cm x 60cm. RHS H5.

6 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Neue Kokarde'** A brilliant selection that looks more like a *Gaillardia* than a chrysanthemum. It has orange-red, semi-double flowers each tipped in gold. Flower size 3cm. 60cm x 40cm. RHS H4.

7 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Ruby Mound'** Masses of ruby-red, double flowers make this a truly arresting sight in a sheltered, sunny, well-drained position. Flower size 5cm. 90cm x 60cm. RHS H4.

8 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Rumpelstilzchen'** Double flowers with flamboyant petals in bright and rusty reds. Needs a well-drained, sunny site. Flowers July to October. Flower size 4cm. 60cm x 80cm. RHS H5.

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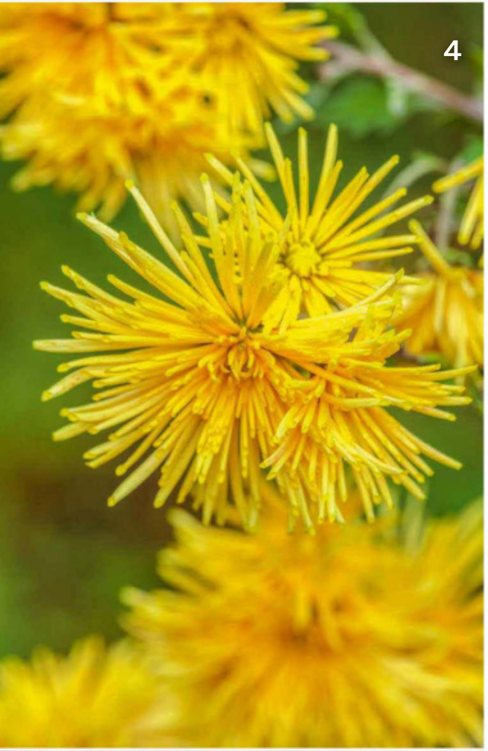
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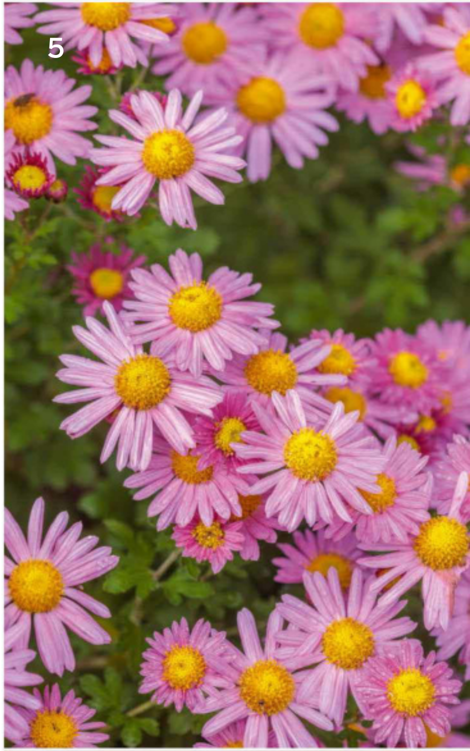
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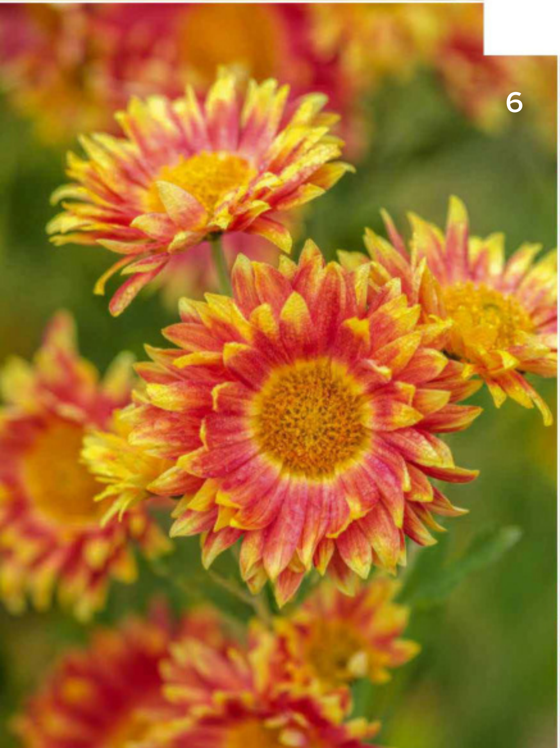
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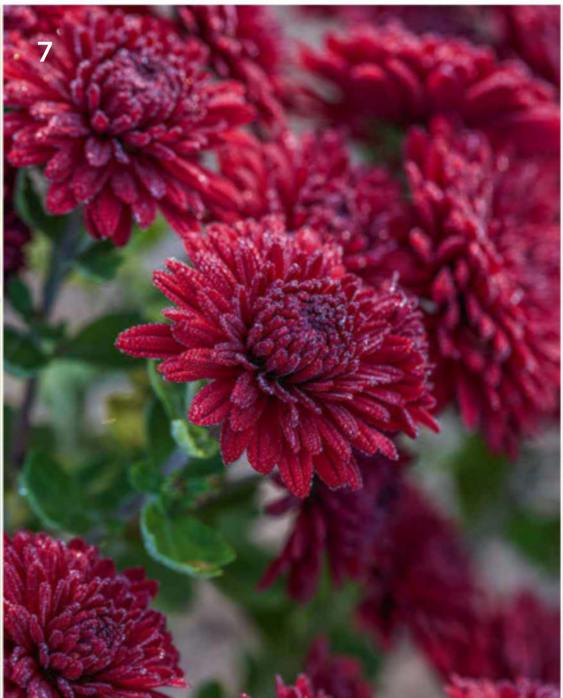
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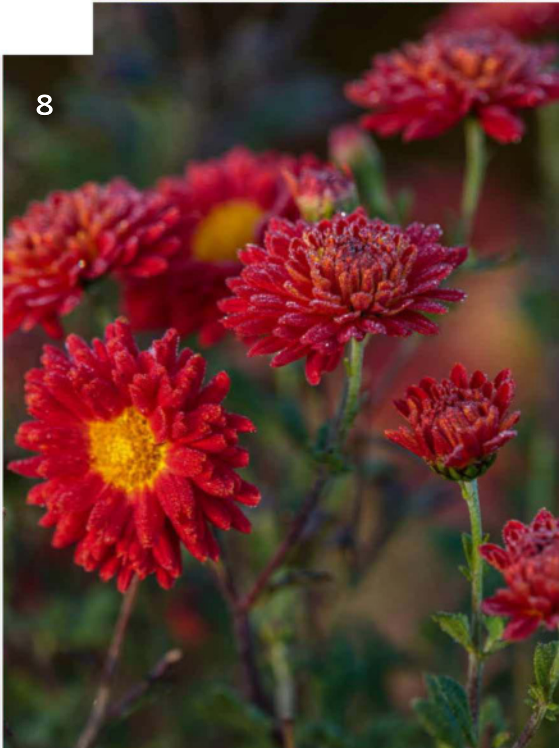
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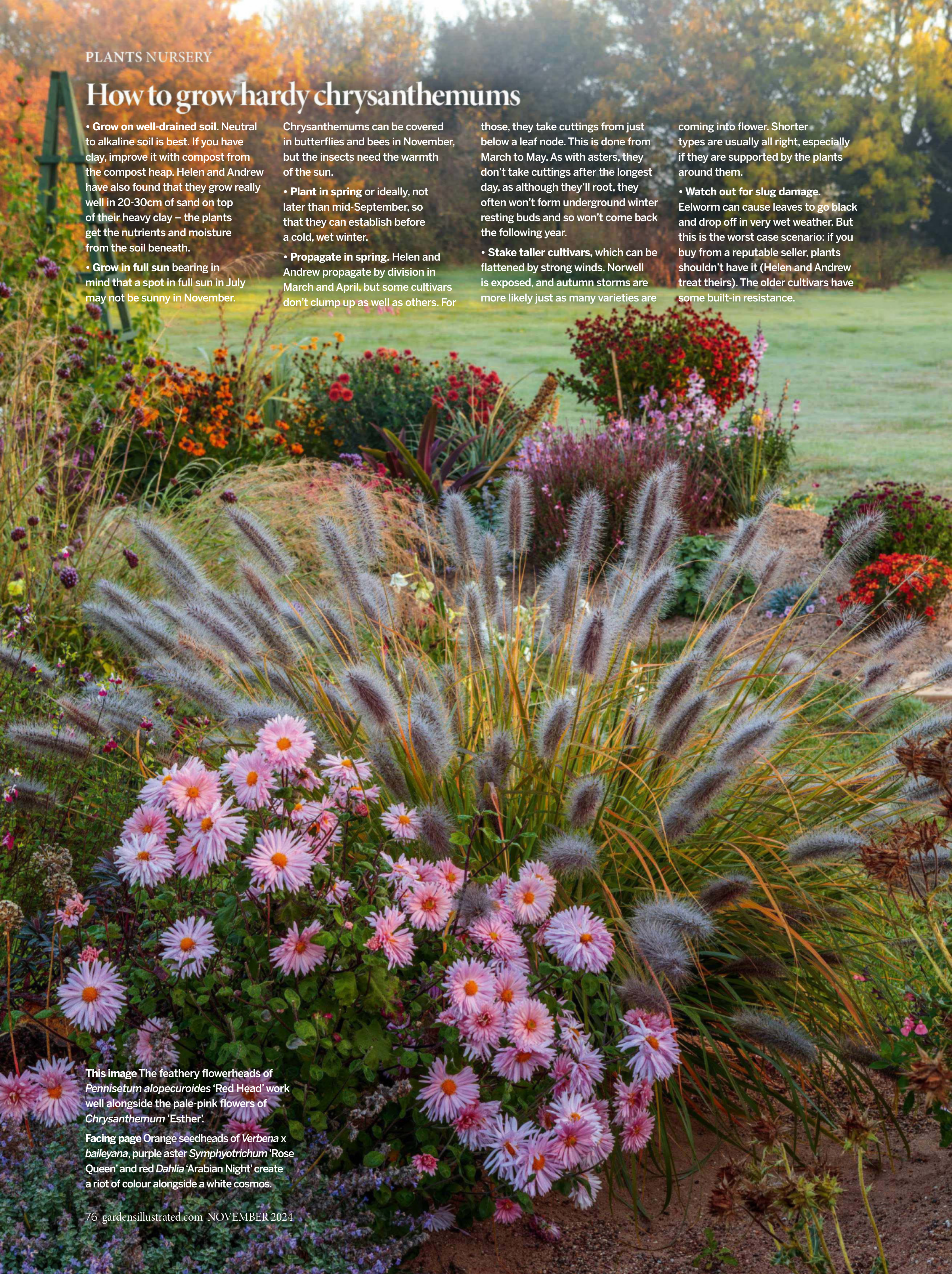
How to grow hardy chrysanthemums

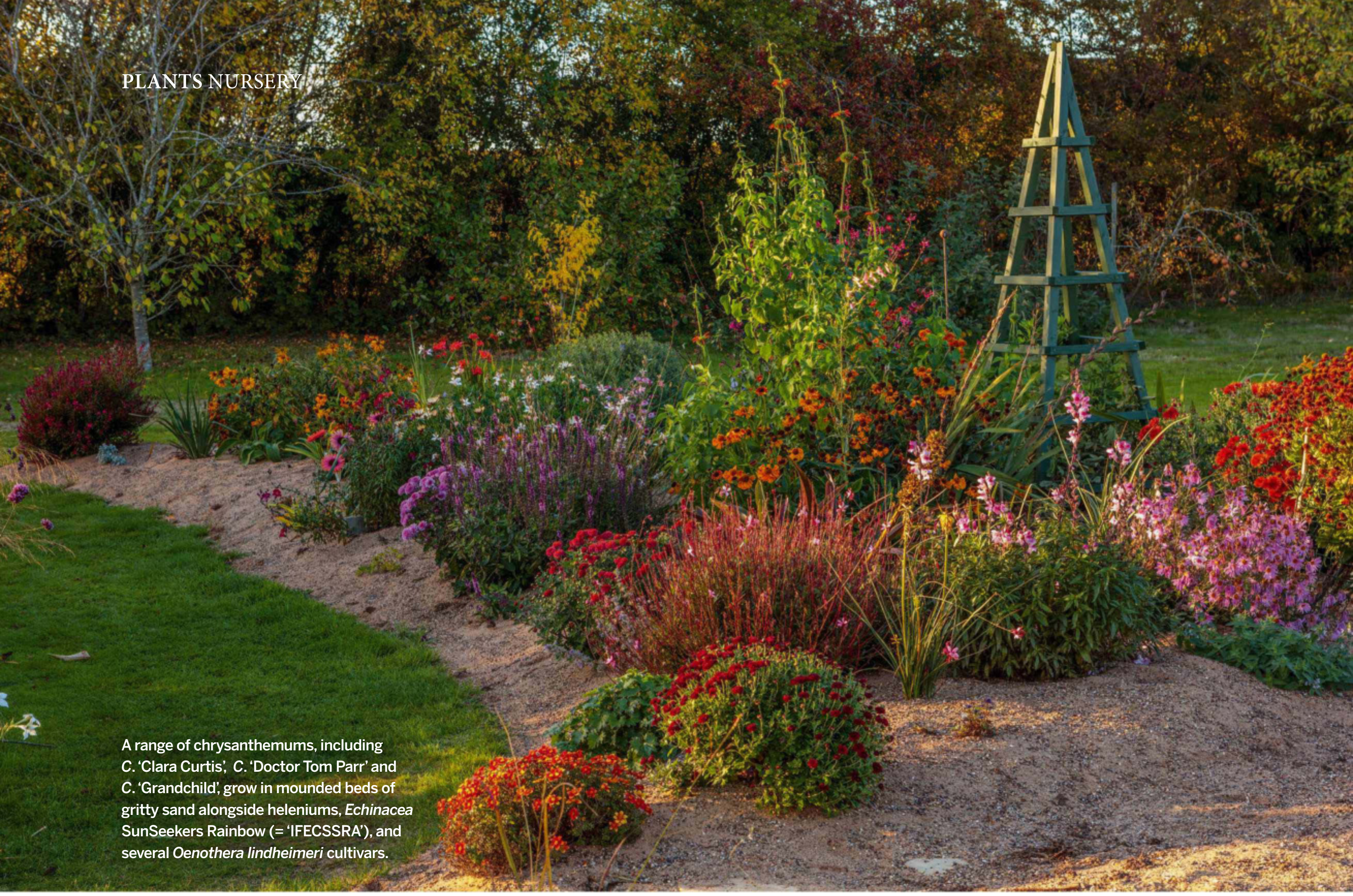
- **Grow on well-drained soil.** Neutral to alkaline soil is best. If you have clay, improve it with compost from the compost heap. Helen and Andrew have also found that they grow really well in 20-30cm of sand on top of their heavy clay – the plants get the nutrients and moisture from the soil beneath.
- **Grow in full sun** bearing in mind that a spot in full sun in July may not be sunny in November. Chrysanthemums can be covered in butterflies and bees in November, but the insects need the warmth of the sun.
- **Plant in spring** or ideally, not later than mid-September, so that they can establish before a cold, wet winter.
- **Propagate in spring.** Helen and Andrew propagate by division in March and April, but some cultivars don't clump up as well as others. For those, they take cuttings from just below a leaf node. This is done from March to May. As with asters, they don't take cuttings after the longest day, as although they'll root, they often won't form underground winter resting buds and so won't come back the following year.
- **Stake taller cultivars,** which can be flattened by strong winds. Norwell is exposed, and autumn storms are more likely just as many varieties are coming into flower. Shorter types are usually all right, especially if they are supported by the plants around them.
- **Watch out for slug damage.** Eelworm can cause leaves to go black and drop off in very wet weather. But this is the worst case scenario: if you buy from a reputable seller, plants shouldn't have it (Helen and Andrew treat theirs). The older cultivars have some built-in resistance.



This image The feathery flowerheads of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Red Head' work well alongside the pale-pink flowers of *Chrysanthemum* 'Esther'.

Facing page Orange seedheads of *Verbena* x *baileyana*, purple aster *Symphyotrichum* 'Rose Queen' and red *Dahlia* 'Arabian Night' create a riot of colour alongside a white cosmos.

We tell visitors that if a plant grows here it will be hardy more or less anywhere



A range of chrysanthemums, including *C.* 'Clara Curtis', *C.* 'Doctor Tom Parr' and *C.* 'Grandchild', grow in mounded beds of gritty sand alongside heleniums, *Echinacea* SunSeekers Rainbow (= 'IFECSSRA'), and several *Oenothera lindheimeri* cultivars.

▷ usefully mid-range in terms of height, around 60cm; distinctive *C.* 'EH Wilson', tall with its profusion of small white flowers that hold well into November; and marvellous *C.* 'Mrs Jessie Cooper', at 90cm, with magenta flowers that still dazzle in December. Several have been raised at Norwell: the muted, vintage-red, *C.* 'Helen Ward' with small pompom flowers; *C.* 'Andrew' with semi-double, cherry-red blooms; and dark peach, semi-double *C.* 'Old Norwell'.

As the chrysanthemums come to the fore, many other tempting late-flowering perennials are also still going strong. Winding paths lead between beds cascading with interest: the tall white-flowered annual *Erigeron annuus,* with little white flowers that are borne non-stop until the first frosts, threads through dahlias, clumps of sanguisorbas, shrubby seedhead-bearing *Bupleurum fruticosum* and roses heavy with reddening hips. Norwell's asters look wonderful amid the turning foliage of perennials such as *Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fireglow'.

Molinia caerulea subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent' forms a shimmering veil in front of the golden heads of lofty perennial *Helianthus*, while in Norwell's new sand beds, pennisetums, including tall *P. macrourum* and impressive *P. alopecuroides* 'Red Head', flaunt their tactile flowerheads beside plants such as pale-pink *Chrysanthemum* 'Esther' and pinky purple *Erodium manescavii*.

These more tender plants thrive at Norwell, despite the cold and clay soil, thanks to Andrew's experiments with sand. Towards the top of the site (where air flows and water drains freely) he constructed brick-built, raised beds filled with gritty sand. "It's an idea I got from Swedish plantsman Peter Korn, who grows in pure sand. Plants grow tougher and prove hardier; it's allowed me to enjoy a much wider range of plants," he explains. Some of the sand beds are simple mounded borders of 30cm at the centre, 20cm at the edge, and plants have done so well that Andrew plans more. "The key is to make sure roots reach underlying soil for moisture and nutrients. Look for grit sand, which has bits of gravel in it – the sort of sand that does not stain your hands if you squash it together," he advises. "When planting (in spring or early summer when the weather has warmed), wash compost off the roots first, otherwise the plants rot in winter. It's also important to feed in spring with a fertiliser such as Growmore."

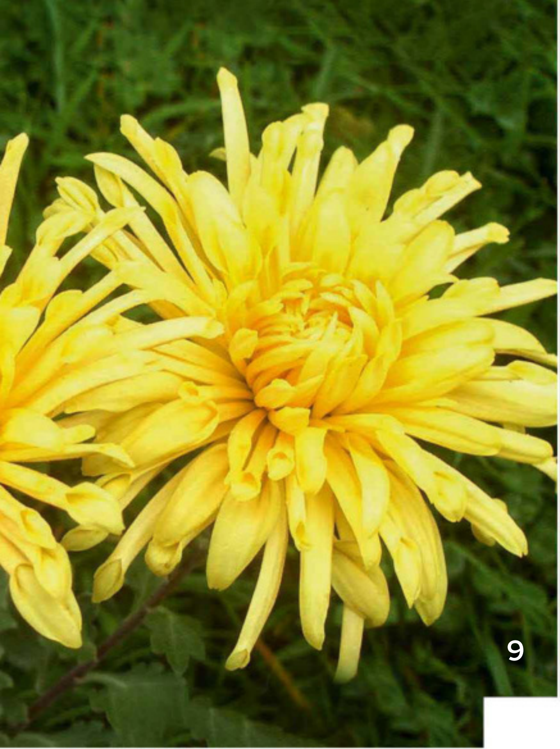
Even 2024's soaking spring and summer, and parched August, did not harm the plants; salvias such as *Salvia* x *jamensis* 'Red Velvet', fiery *Epilobium canum* 'Olbrich Silver' and various cultivars of *Oenothera lindheimeri* are flourishing. Also stand-out in late season are collections of *Echinacea*, *Erodium*, *Helenium* and marvellous *Geranium wallichianum* 'Crystal Lake' with pale-blue, purple-veined flowers. More dainty plants also thrive, including the little *Acis autumnalis* with its tiny white bells. The sand beds in cool shade are home to a collection of autumn-flowering toad lilies, including *Tricyrtis* 'Tojen', with pink unspotted flowers, and diminutive *T.* 'Taipei Silk', its petals touched with blue.

Norwell Nurseries shows so well how it is possible to meet the challenge of a tricky site while also planting creatively to extend the season. Spring and summer, so often the focus of the gardening year, seem increasingly unpredictable, but frankly, what's past is prologue; if your garden looks good in autumn, disappointments early in the season are easily forgotten. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Norwell Nurseries, Woodhouse Road, Norwell, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 6JX. **Tel** 0163 6636337.
Web norwellnurseries.co.uk

Chrysanthemums are propagated for mail order in spring. See website for details of opening times and for dates of special chrysanthemum openings in November.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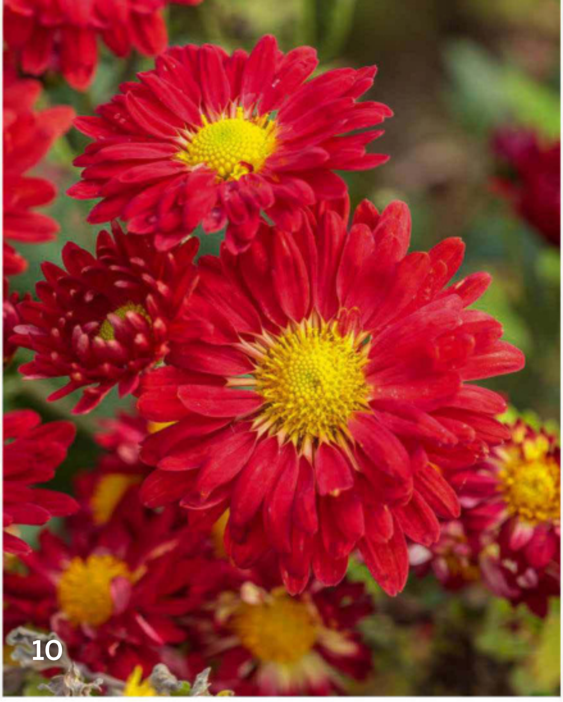
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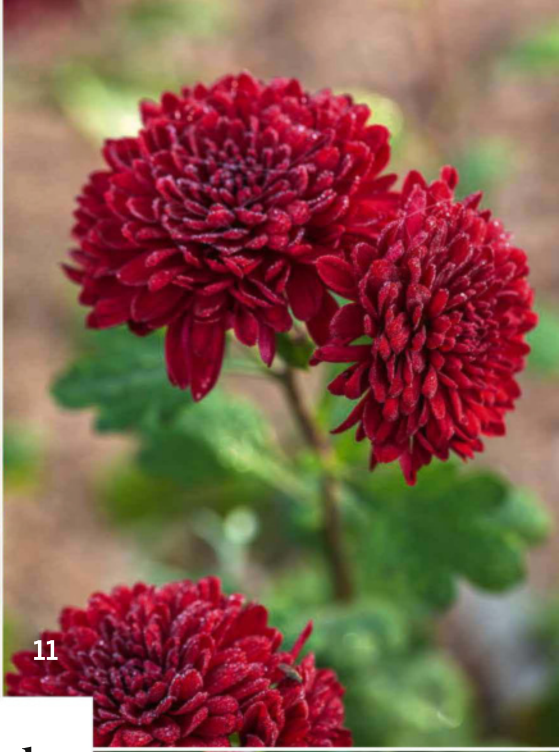
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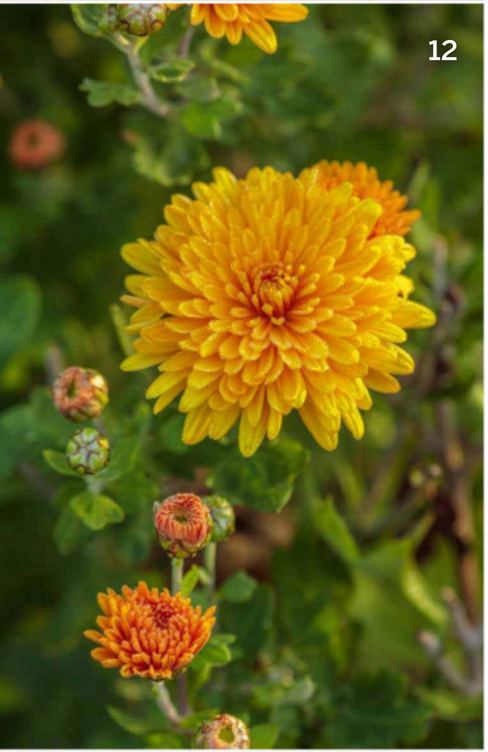
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Top chrysanthemums continued

9 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Capel Manor'** Has creamy golden-yellow quilled double flowers in October to November. Grown for years at Capel Manor College, hence the name. Flower size 7cm. 60cm x 60cm. RHS H5.

10 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Andrew'** Bred at Norwell. It is a luscious semi-double crimson, cherry red with a contrasting golden eye. A strong grower standing well in late October. Flower size 5cm. 90cm x 80cm. RHS H4.

11 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Helen Ward'** Raised at Norwell, with double pompom heads of dusky-coral crimson with a gold centre. Needs sun and well-drained soil. Hardy and floriferous. Flower size 4cm. 60cm x 50cm. RHS H4.

12 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Ruby Raynor'** Multitude of rich semi-double, golden-yellow flowers. It begins to flower in July and continues through to late October. It stands well and is good for cutting. Flower size 5cm. 75cm x 80cm. RHS H4.

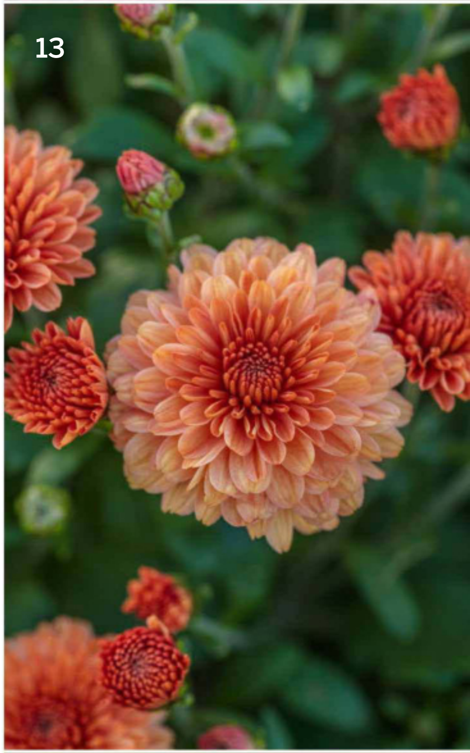
13 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Picasso'** Flowers later than most pompoms, opening in October. Peachy-pink with an attractive darker centre, it needs a well-drained and sunny site. One of the Hardy Plant Society's endangered plants, but Norwell is ensuring its survival. Flower size 4cm. 45cm x 30cm. RHS H4.

14 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Šlapanica Eliška'** Czech cultivar introduced to UK by collection holder Judy Barker. Cerise-pink single flowers enhanced by silvery reverse to petals. Strong stems. Flower size 6cm. 75cm x 60cm. RHS H4.

15 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Eugens Bitterschokolade'** Rare German cultivar with red buds that open to velvety, deep-red, semi-double blooms. Has a highly contrasting gold eye. Flower size 4cm. 45cm x 60cm. RHS H4.

16 ***Chrysanthemum* 'Burnt Orange'** Distinctive jagged grey-green leaves and masses of unusual and attractive spider-like, burnt-orange flowers in autumn. Cut flowers last ages in water. Flower size 6cm. 90cm x 60cm. RHS H5.

[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.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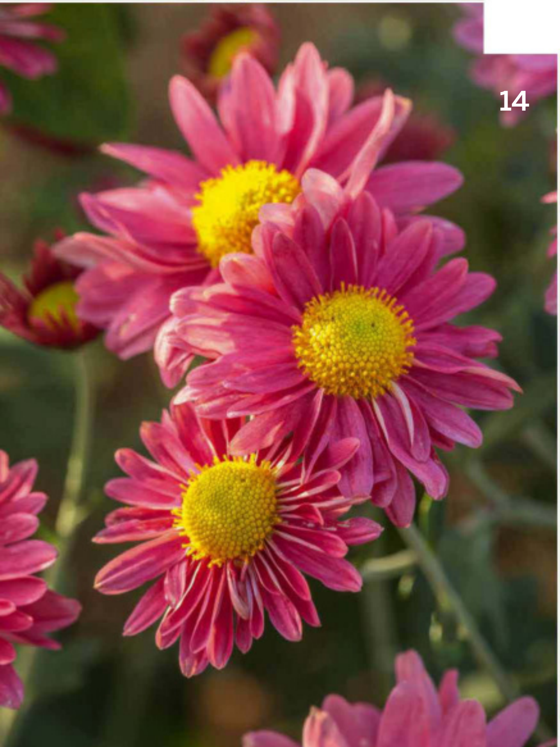
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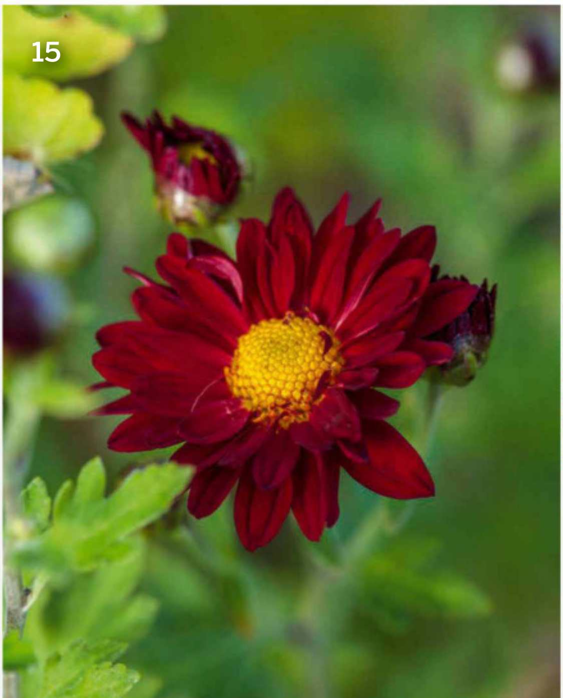
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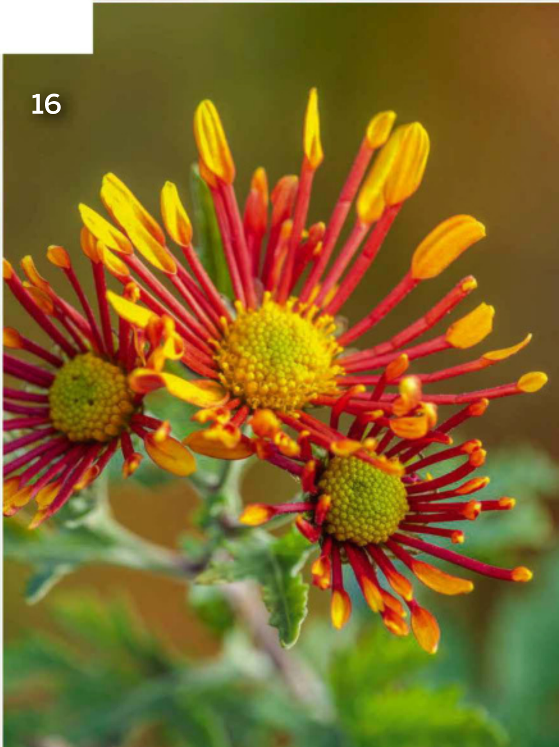
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All in the mind

Gardeners know that time in the garden can clear your head, but as **Dr Richard Claxton** reveals, it can actually improve your focus, cognition and creativity

ILLUSTRATION VICKI TURNER

As Oliver Sacks, the celebrated neurologist and writer wrote: 'I cannot say exactly how nature exerts its calming and organising effects on our brains, but I have seen in my patients the restorative and healing powers of nature and gardens, even for those who are deeply disabled neurologically. In many cases, gardens and nature are more powerful than any medication.'

And it's true: our brain health is enhanced by being in nature and by gardening, and this is because of the complex interaction of different cognitive processes we employ. It happens in a variety of different ways as we garden; these are both conscious and subconscious.

Brain power

We're only just beginning to understand how the heady mix of so many different sensory signals in our gardens can affect us. In her new book *Good Nature*, Professor Kathy Willis explores these. The verdant green of our surroundings, the shapes and patterns in the landscape, the scented aromatic chemicals released by plants and soils, the sounds of birdsong and leaves rustling in the wind, the impact of touching wood, leaves, water, as well as the richness of the microbiome that fills the air, all combine to enhance our cognitive state, increasing both our focus and cerebral capabilities, at the same time as relaxing our minds.

And consciously, when in the garden, we may be thinking strategically, using so-called executive function. This includes planning our garden layout, the plants we need to buy or propagate, where we might fit them in, the seed-tray Jenga we have to play in our greenhouse space, the crops we need to rotate, the impact of the weather forecast, working out the best time to harvest, and what to do or cook with what we've grown, as well as how all these tasks might fit into the time we have available. And all the while we are driven onwards by the relentless progression of time. As the seasons move on, we need to keep up with them and their respective demands.

At the same time, the tasks themselves require our brains to work in a totally different way: often repetitive and involving the motor cortex of our brain, harnessing our manual dexterity. Learned movements of seed-sowing, weeding, pricking out or potting on, or more vigorous activity, such as raking or digging, often become semi-automatic. As muscle memory takes over, the brain relaxes into the repetition that these activities require. We gardeners can find that a deep sense of relaxation follows. Likened to mindfulness, these activities allow a kind of disconnect and reboot of the right and left sides of the brain that can be intensely restful, as other worries and stresses take on a new, less overwhelming perspective.

Cognitive gym

Creativity is a fourth aspect of cognitive function that's brought to the fore in the garden. We're trying to create a beautiful space, an outdoor room, to enhance our lives. I personally feel some sadness that years in clinical medicine have squeezed out much of my innate creativity.

I love that the garden reconnects me with art and craft, in the space that I'm working to create (with both help and hindrance from nature).

But often creativity also is manifest in a make-do-and-mend way, as gardeners thriftily and craftily repurpose and recycle bits and bobs to suit their needs. The colourful and creative invention and imagination revealed on any allotment site always fills me with wonder.

So how can these benefits be harvested? Well, we can start young. A 2014 literature review revealed that gardening in childhood has been shown to enhance motivation, problem-solving skills and creativity. Quantitative data is hard to establish, but verbal accounts of the RHS's Gardening for Schools programme have described a powerful rebalancing across cohorts, whereby those who are considered less academic, or who struggle with focus in a classroom environment, suddenly start to match their peers across of a range of outcomes.

In the workplace, a green space indoors or out has an impact on focus, creativity and productivity as well as reducing the stress within the environment. Rates of attendance and sick leave also improve for the better.

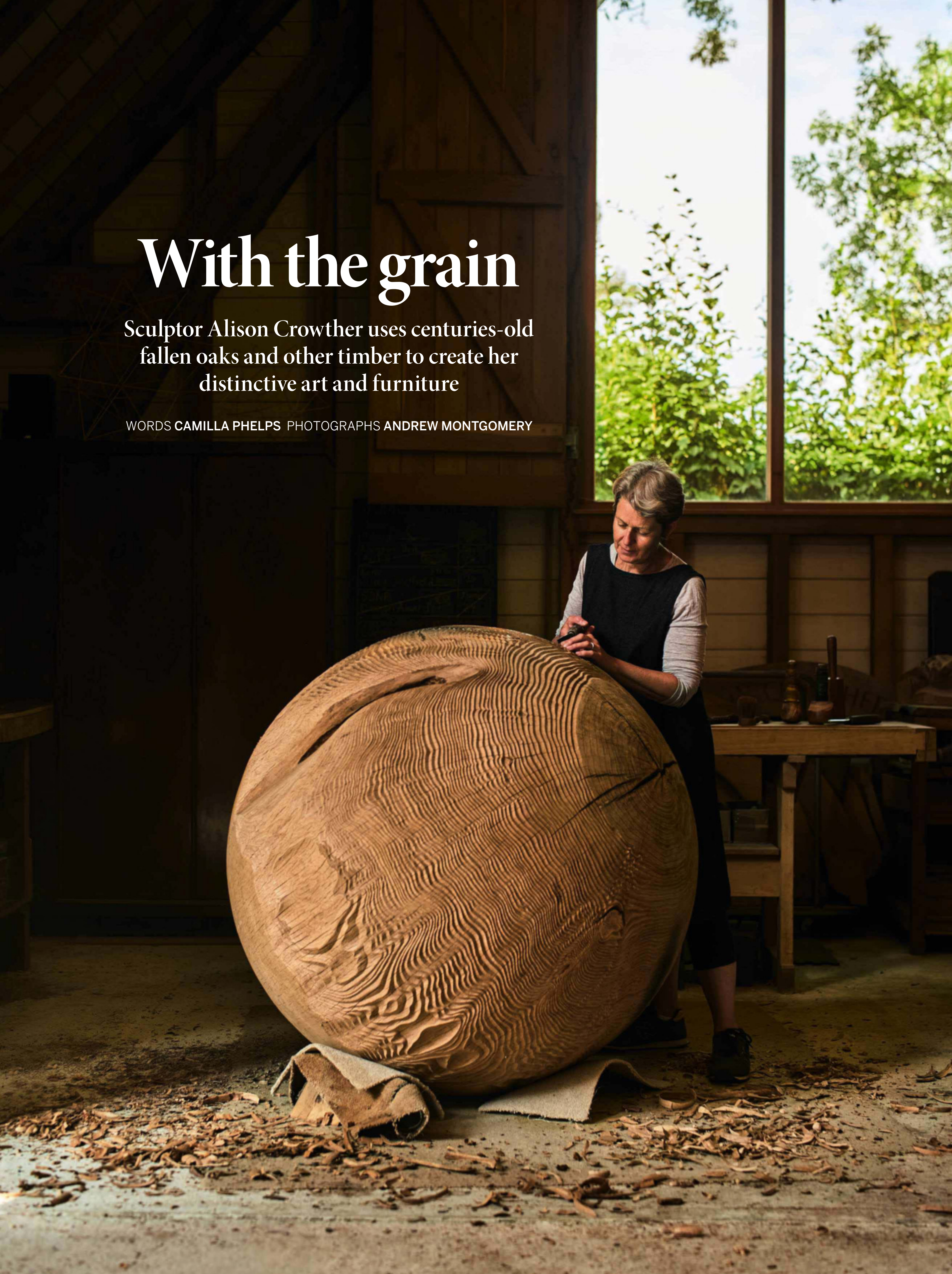
Delaying dementia

Dementia is less likely in cohorts of gardening adults. The Dubbo Study in Australia showed that activities including gardening can delay its progression, and, for those with established dementia, symptoms of stress and anxiety are diminished when time is spent in, or even simply looking at, a natural environment. Sacks noted that often patients with dementia find joy in connecting with the long-remembered rituals of garden tasks, in much the same way that they can do with music. Stress and agitation are reduced in care-home residents with dementia on the evenings after gardening sessions, such that staffing levels can even be reduced.

So, there's plenty of evidence of the benefits to gardening for our brain-health and cognitive well-being. Now, if I could just figure out where I can squeeze in that gorgeous peony I fell for at the garden centre… □

Richard Claxton is a GP, garden designer and founder of green-prescribing network Gardening4Health

PORTRAIT BY LISA LINDER



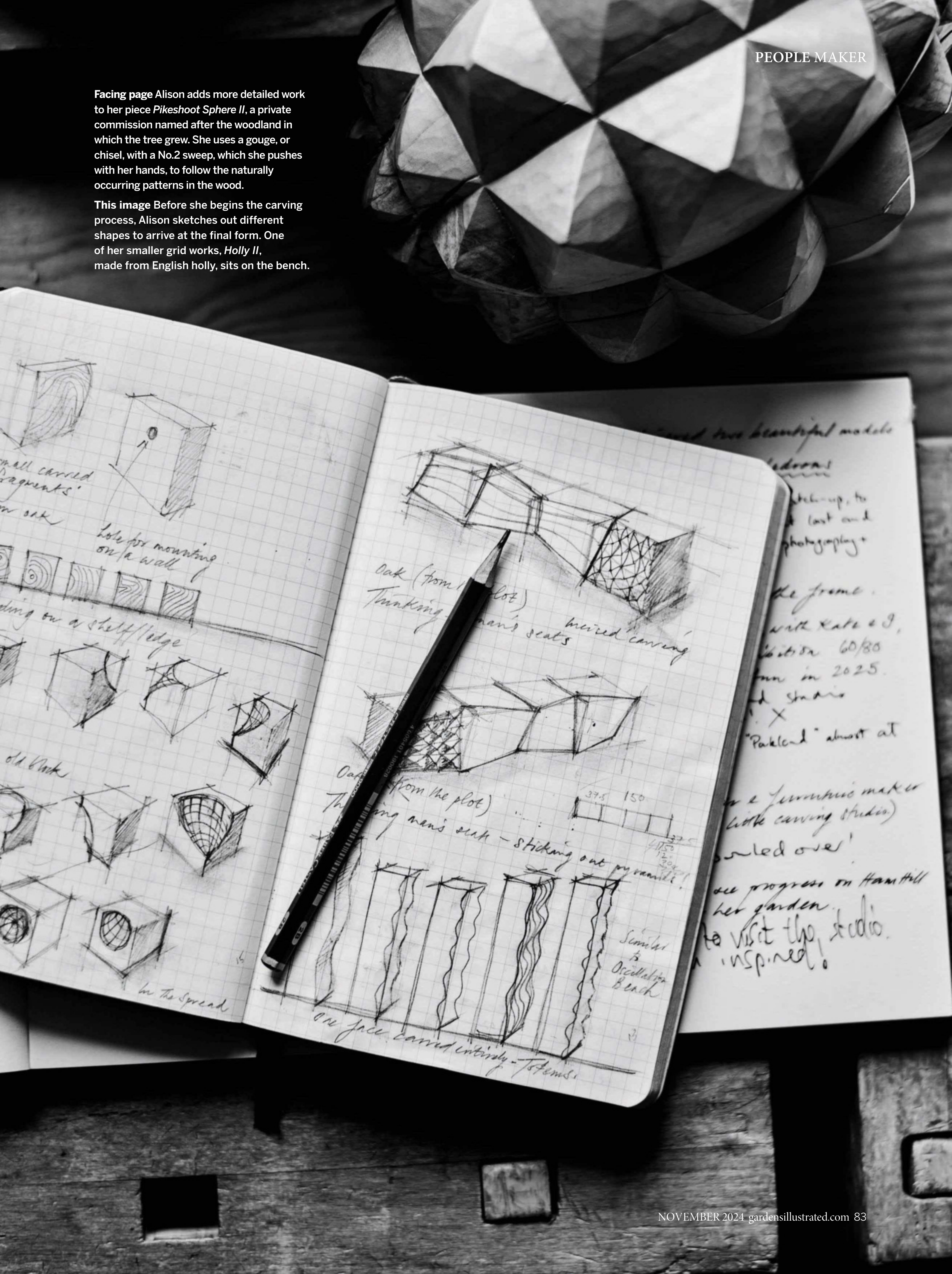
With the grain

Sculptor Alison Crowther uses centuries-old fallen oaks and other timber to create her distinctive art and furniture

WORDS **CAMILLA PHELPS** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Facing page Alison adds more detailed work to her piece *Pikeshoot Sphere II*, a private commission named after the woodland in which the tree grew. She uses a gouge, or chisel, with a No.2 sweep, which she pushes with her hands, to follow the naturally occurring patterns in the wood.

This image Before she begins the carving process, Alison sketches out different shapes to arrive at the final form. One of her smaller grid works, *Holly II*, made from English holly, sits on the bench.


small carved fragments
oak
Hole for mounting on a wall
on a shelf/ledge
old block
In the Spread
Oak (from the plot)
Thinking man's seats
Mirrored carving
Oak (from the plot)
Thinking men's seat – sticking out pyramids!
37.5
150
Similar to Oscillation Beach
One face carved entirely – Totems.
two beautiful models
"Parkland" almost at
to visit the studio.
inspired!

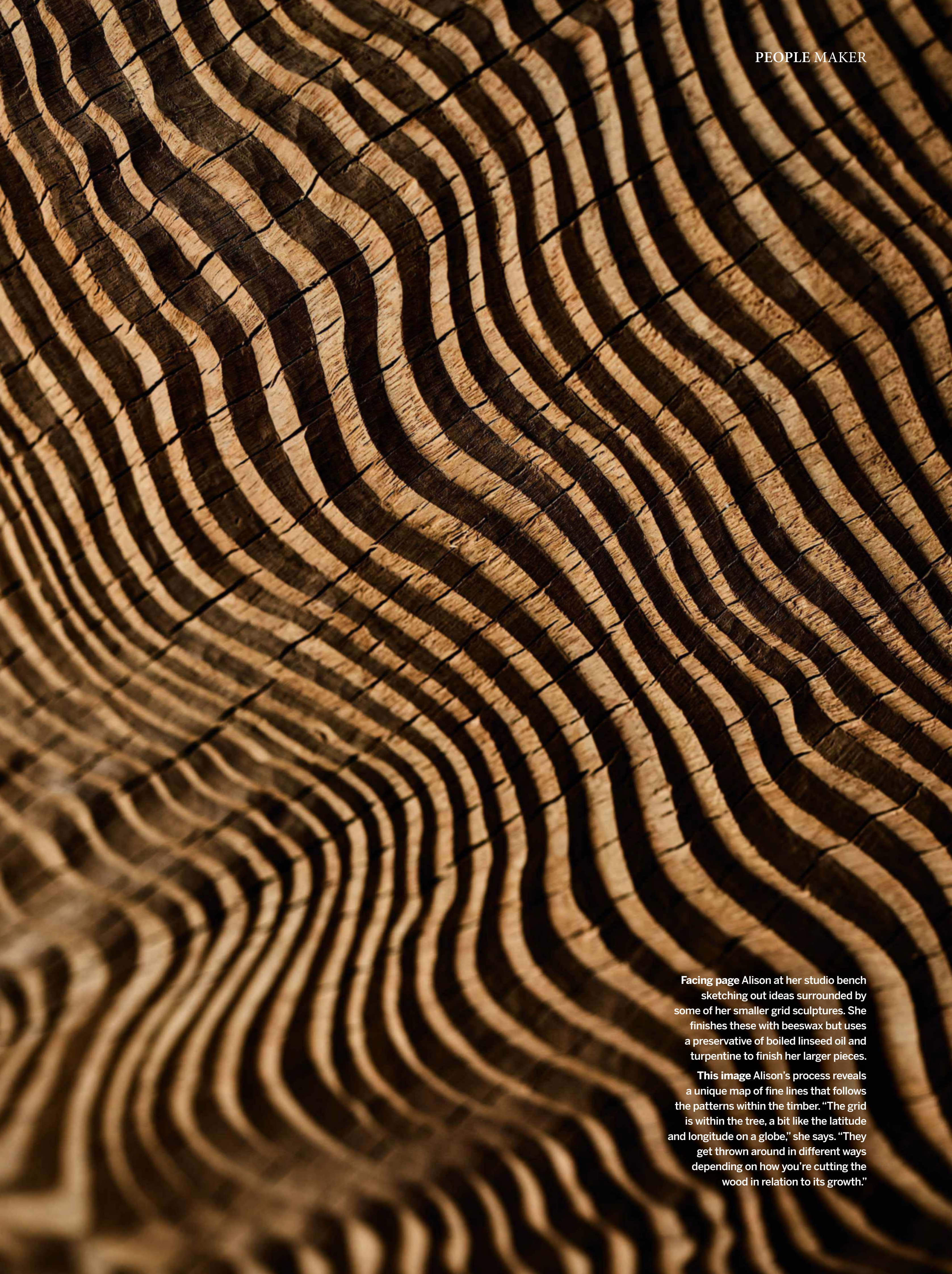
When a fallen tree is brought to Alison Crowther's attention, she reads the timber closely, intimately. Using the barely visible tracery of annual rings and medullary rays as a natural template, she coaxes new forms from the wood – spheres, giant eggs, benches and desktops. Her carving process reveals a unique map of fine lines or a deeper grid that follows the patterns within the timber.

"The carving of the wood feels like it's singing with the tree, that we are in it together. I'm not this artist enforcing their will onto the material to make it do something it really doesn't want to do," she says. "I'm giving the tree its second life. Each branch has its own annual rings and that's where the interesting bits, the complex bits lie for me, where there are artistic decisions to be made."

Born in Yorkshire, Alison found a path to art and design through drawing and making as a child. She credits her stickler of an aunt, who taught her how to follow dress patterns, with ingraining in her the importance of accuracy and attention to detail. Looking at her sketchbooks, you can almost see a pattern-maker's eye in the meticulous plans for each sculpture with each part of the process carefully mapped out. This is precision crafting.

Her affinity with wood has evolved from a first degree in furniture design. "I was always interested in contemporary sculpture, but felt I needed a skill ▷

The carving of the wood feels like it's singing with the tree, that we are in it together



Facing page Alison at her studio bench sketching out ideas surrounded by some of her smaller grid sculptures. She finishes these with beeswax but uses a preservative of boiled linseed oil and turpentine to finish her larger pieces.

This image Alison's process reveals a unique map of fine lines that follows the patterns within the timber. "The grid is within the tree, a bit like the latitude and longitude on a globe," she says. "They get thrown around in different ways depending on how you're cutting the wood in relation to its growth."

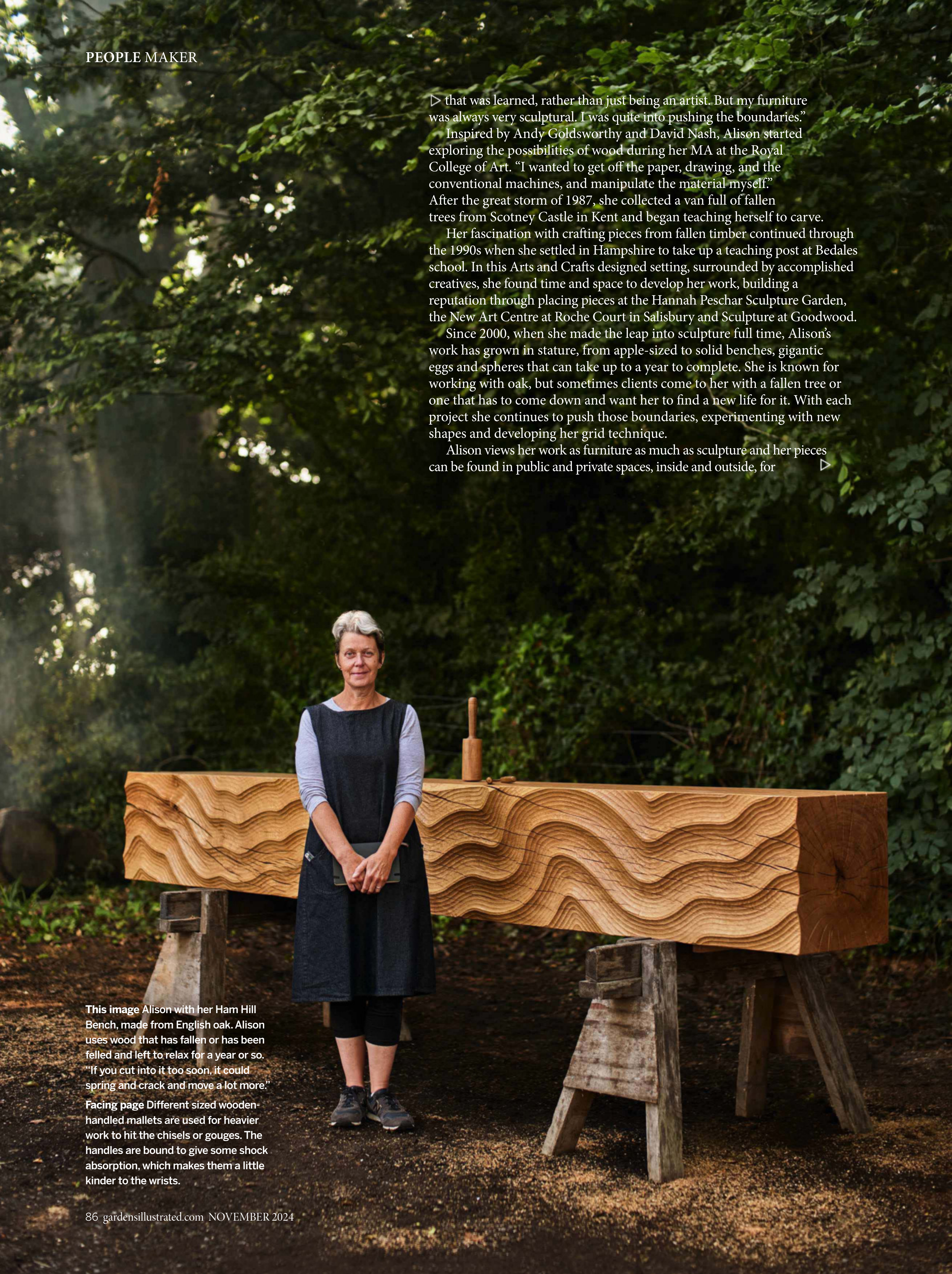
▷ that was learned, rather than just being an artist. But my furniture was always very sculptural. I was quite into pushing the boundaries."

Inspired by Andy Goldsworthy and David Nash, Alison started exploring the possibilities of wood during her MA at the Royal College of Art. "I wanted to get off the paper, drawing, and the conventional machines, and manipulate the material myself." After the great storm of 1987, she collected a van full of fallen trees from Scotney Castle in Kent and began teaching herself to carve.

Her fascination with crafting pieces from fallen timber continued through the 1990s when she settled in Hampshire to take up a teaching post at Bedales school. In this Arts and Crafts designed setting, surrounded by accomplished creatives, she found time and space to develop her work, building a reputation through placing pieces at the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden, the New Art Centre at Roche Court in Salisbury and Sculpture at Goodwood.

Since 2000, when she made the leap into sculpture full time, Alison's work has grown in stature, from apple-sized to solid benches, gigantic eggs and spheres that can take up to a year to complete. She is known for working with oak, but sometimes clients come to her with a fallen tree or one that has to come down and want her to find a new life for it. With each project she continues to push those boundaries, experimenting with new shapes and developing her grid technique.

Alison views her work as furniture as much as sculpture and her pieces can be found in public and private spaces, inside and outside, for ▷



This image Alison with her Ham Hill Bench, made from English oak. Alison uses wood that has fallen or has been felled and left to relax for a year or so. "If you cut into it too soon, it could spring and crack and move a lot more."

Facing page Different sized wooden-handled mallets are used for heavier work to hit the chisels or gouges. The handles are bound to give some shock absorption, which makes them a little kinder to the wrists.

Because the process that I use is,
by the nature of using hand tools,
very slow, it's comforting, steadying
and reassuring

▷ clients around the world. She's worked with many garden designers on private commissions and show gardens, from the late John Brookes, who gave her much encouragement in her early days, to Dan Pearson, Arne Maynard, Tom Stuart-Smith, Marian Boswall and Jamie Butterworth, who featured her beautiful curved oak benches on his 2022 RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden.

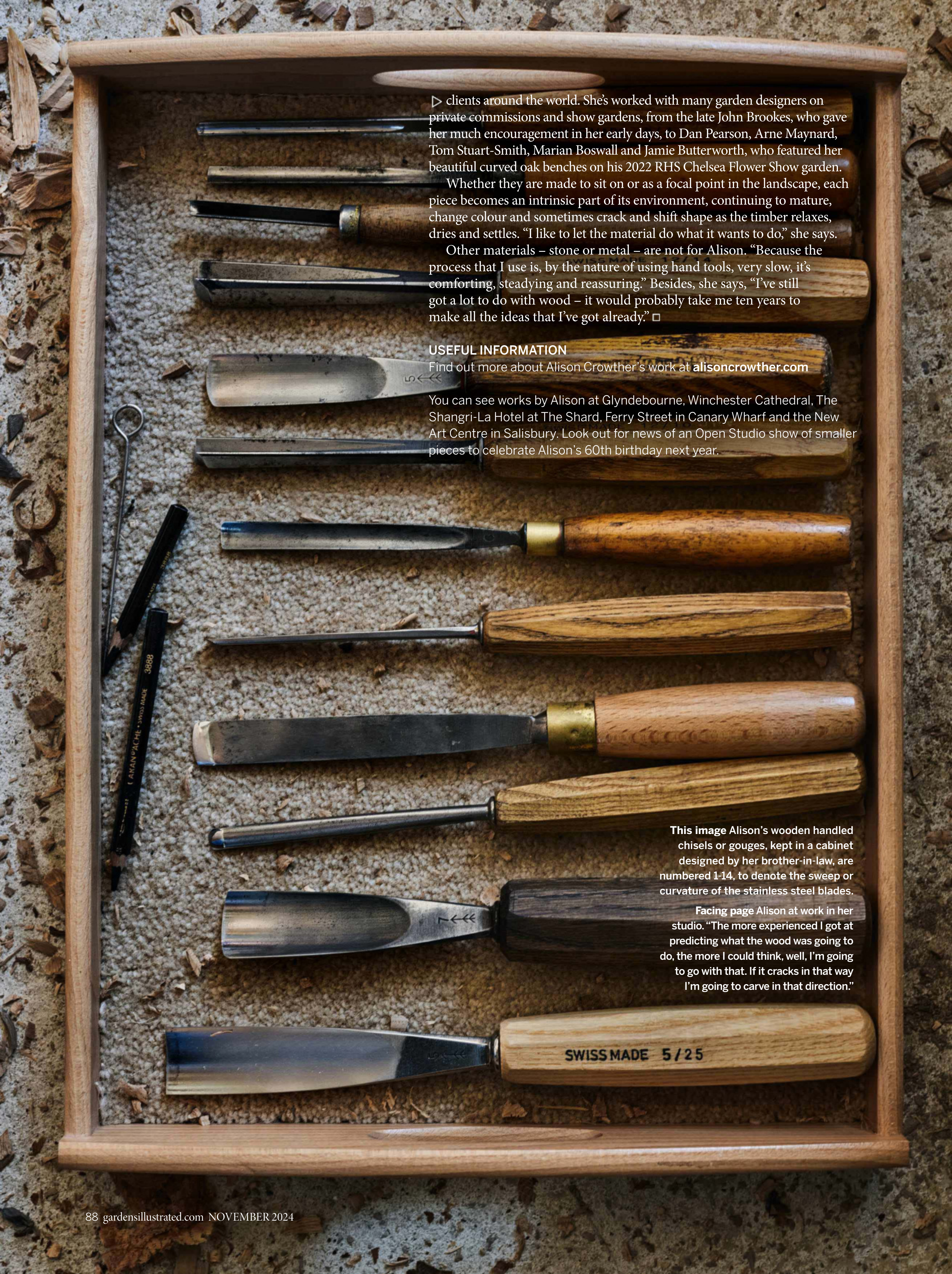
Whether they are made to sit on or as a focal point in the landscape, each piece becomes an intrinsic part of its environment, continuing to mature, change colour and sometimes crack and shift shape as the timber relaxes, dries and settles. "I like to let the material do what it wants to do," she says.

Other materials – stone or metal – are not for Alison. "Because the process that I use is, by the nature of using hand tools, very slow, it's comforting, steadying and reassuring." Besides, she says, "I've still got a lot to do with wood – it would probably take me ten years to make all the ideas that I've got already." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

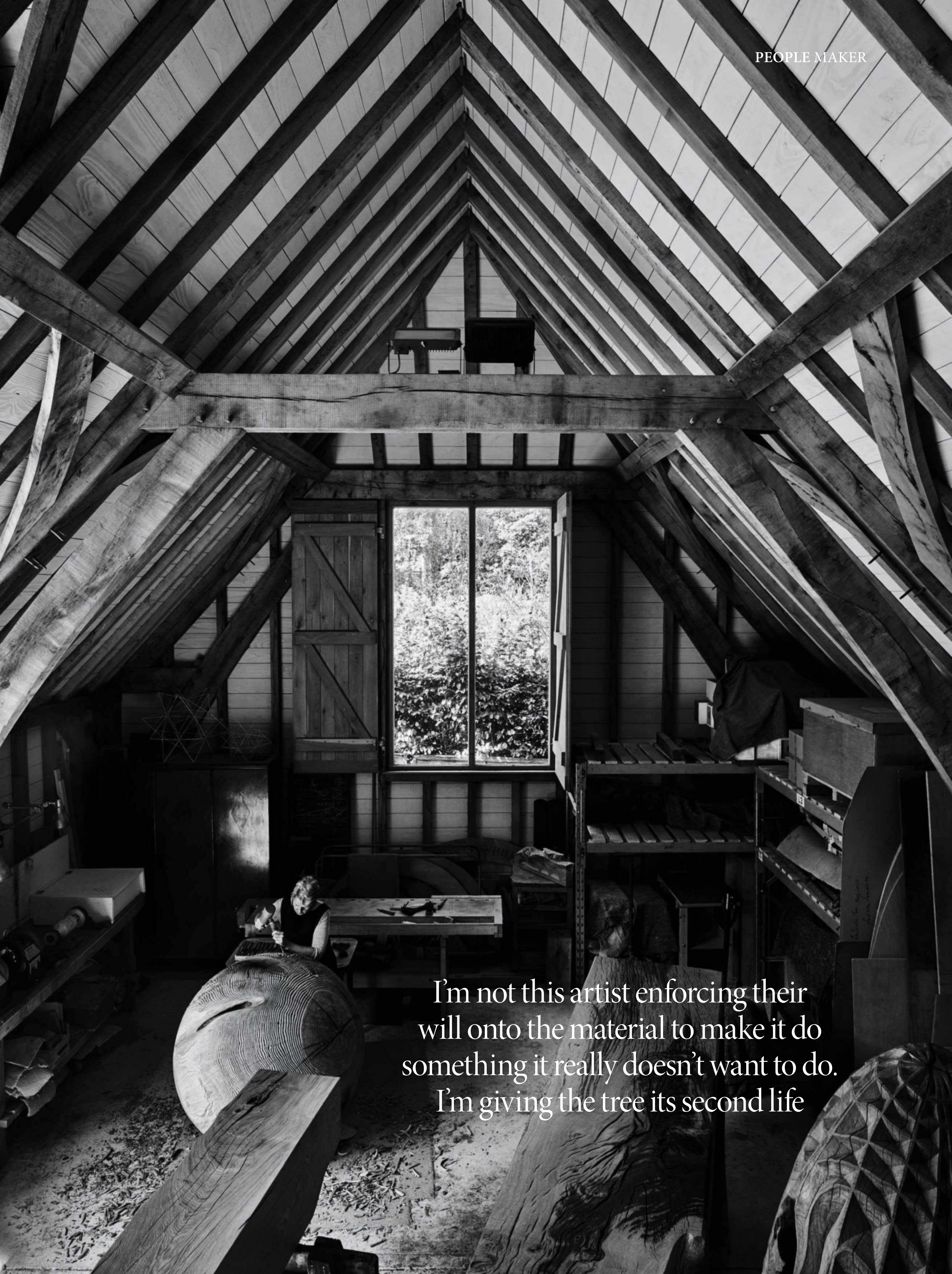
Find out more about Alison Crowther's work at **alisoncrowther.com**

You can see works by Alison at Glyndebourne, Winchester Cathedral, The Shangri-La Hotel at The Shard, Ferry Street in Canary Wharf and the New Art Centre in Salisbury. Look out for news of an Open Studio show of smaller pieces to celebrate Alison's 60th birthday next year.



This image Alison's wooden handled chisels or gouges, kept in a cabinet designed by her brother-in-law, are numbered 1-14, to denote the sweep or curvature of the stainless steel blades.

Facing page Alison at work in her studio. "The more experienced I got at predicting what the wood was going to do, the more I could think, well, I'm going to go with that. If it cracks in that way I'm going to carve in that direction."



I’m not this artist enforcing their will onto the material to make it do something it really doesn’t want to do. I’m giving the tree its second life

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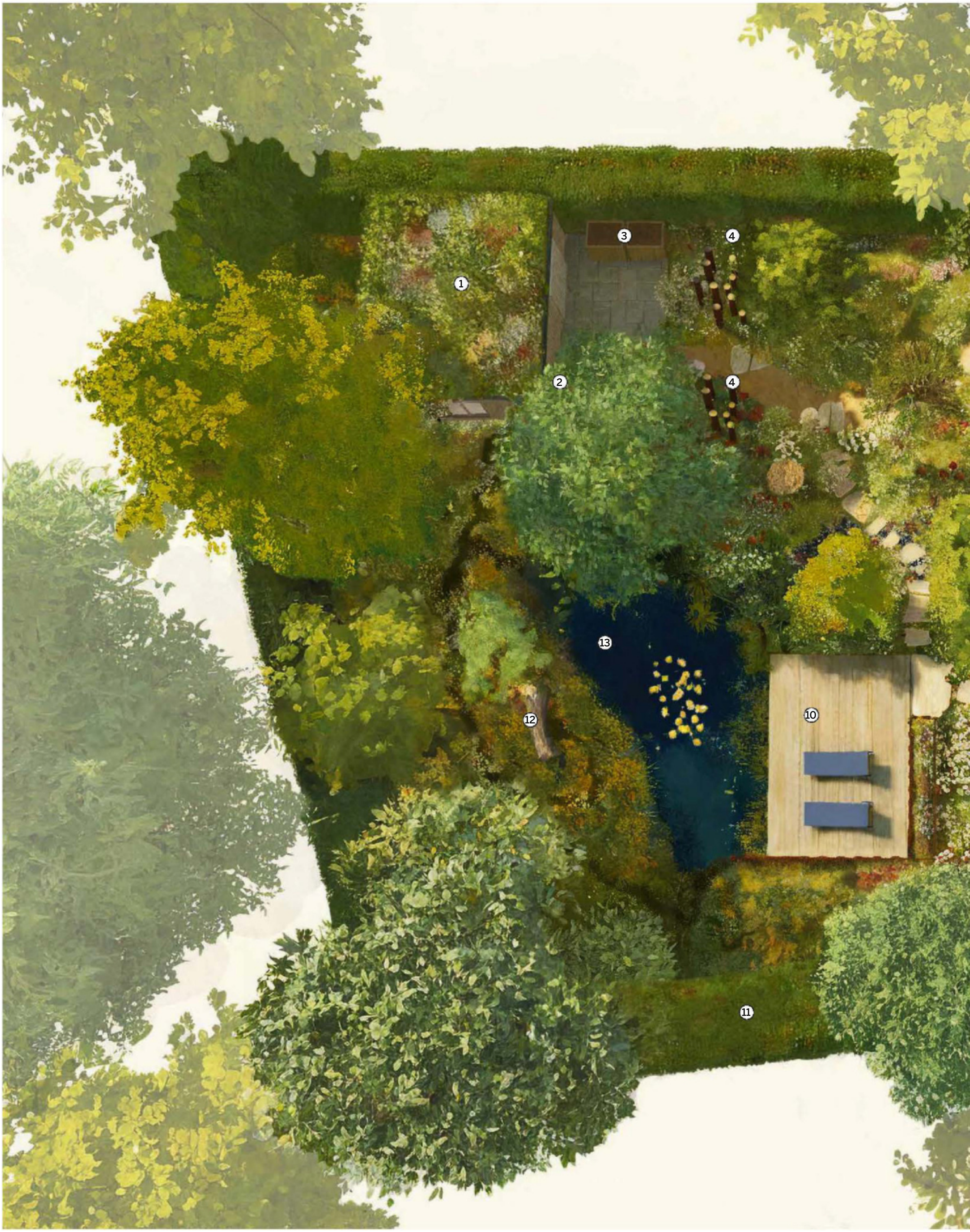
Out of the rubble

A new community garden has opened in Colchester thanks to a collaboration between Beth Chatto's Plants & Gardens, the Beth Chatto Education Trust, Essex County Council and designer Darryl Moore. The Meanwhile Garden has transformed a small brownfield site into a pocket park for the local community to enjoy. Unused rubble from another part of the site has been used as a planting medium and the space has been designed to work for both ornamental and wild plants to take hold. All the ornamental plants, including *Erigeron karvinskianus*, *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' and *Verbena bonariensis*, were grown by the team at Beth Chatto's and were selected because they thrive with little maintenance and no watering. The site is owned by Essex County Council and had been unused since 2012; should the council find another use for the space it will be returned to its care, hence the name Meanwhile Garden. For more information about the project, visit **bethchatto.co.uk**

WORDS MOLLY BLAIR. PHOTOGRAPHS JULIE SKELTON



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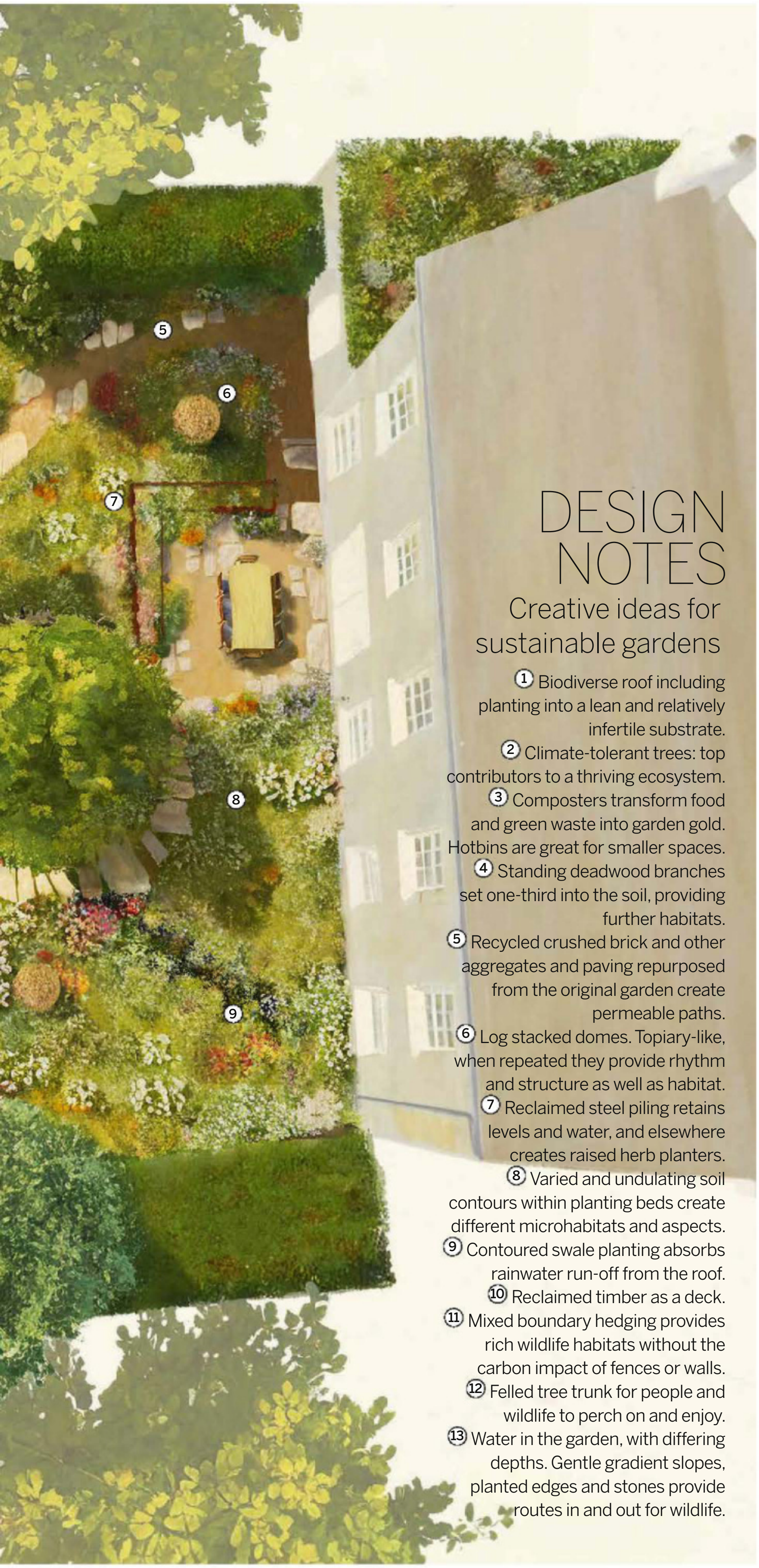
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

In the second of her new garden design series, **Charlotte Harris** explains how to make spaces that are ecological and beautiful



DESIGN NOTES

Creative ideas for sustainable gardens

① Biodiverse roof including planting into a lean and relatively infertile substrate.
② Climate-tolerant trees: top contributors to a thriving ecosystem.
③ Composters transform food and green waste into garden gold. Hotbins are great for smaller spaces.
④ Standing deadwood branches set one-third into the soil, providing further habitats.
⑤ Recycled crushed brick and other aggregates and paving repurposed from the original garden create permeable paths.
⑥ Log stacked domes. Topiary-like, when repeated they provide rhythm and structure as well as habitat.
⑦ Reclaimed steel piling retains levels and water, and elsewhere creates raised herb planters.
⑧ Varied and undulating soil contours within planting beds create different microhabitats and aspects.
⑨ Contoured swale planting absorbs rainwater run-off from the roof.
⑩ Reclaimed timber as a deck.
⑪ Mixed boundary hedging provides rich wildlife habitats without the carbon impact of fences or walls.
⑫ Felled tree trunk for people and wildlife to perch on and enjoy.
⑬ Water in the garden, with differing depths. Gentle gradient slopes, planted edges and stones provide routes in and out for wildlife.

ILLUSTRATION HARRIS BUGG STUDIO. PORTRAIT CHRISTA HOLKA

A confession: I find the word 'sustainability' a bit of a hindrance. It's often under-delivered, and has become a sort of jargon that doesn't always feel relatable. But by making active choices on the features we create in our gardens, the materials we use and the methods we employ to reduce energy use, we not only create beautiful, functional spaces, we also support ecosystems at a time when they need it the most.

We must seriously consider the carbon impact of construction, demolition-related emissions and issues around the extraction of finite raw materials. It is challenging, but it can create exciting possibilities to think more creatively about what and how we make the bones of our gardens.

Minimally processed materials require less energy to produce compared to materials with high-energy inputs or processes, such as concrete. And while high-quality natural materials, such as stone and hardwood, can be more expensive to buy, they are far more durable and have longer lifespans.

Local sourcing is one way to reduce your impact, by minimising transport emissions, and it grounds your garden in the materials that feel right for the setting. On the Isle of Skye, we're working on two projects in Sleat where the stone material for the garden is site-won first and foremost; and where we need additional gravel, this is from Kyleakin quarry, just a few miles away, sharing the same geology and appearance.

Materials already on site are always an asset – and that's as true of waste as of beautiful Scottish boulders. In Berlin, we are making a garden for a creative and social change campus where the existing six-acre site was covered in concrete paving blocks. Over the past four years, inspired by the pioneering work of John Little, we've been gradually lifting and crushing those pavers on-site in a phased approach. Instead of ▷

Charlotte Harris is an award-winning garden designer, co-founder of Harris Bugg Studio with Hugo Bugg, and a *Gardens Illustrated* contributing editor.

DESIGN IDEAS

① **Walls at Hilldrop**
Using rubble, waste and demolition materials, Duncan Nuttall has employed traditional stone craftsmanship skills to create this stunning wall at trail-blazer John Little's garden, Hilldrop in Essex. Bamboo pieces and boxes for solitary bees are incorporated and plants can seed into it.

② **Preloved paving**
Hugo Bugg and I decided that our paving for the M&G garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2021 would be defined by what we had to hand, not by what we wanted. A mixed mosaic of reclaimed materials, from old pieces of platform to cobbles, were the starting point. It's an approach we've used since on a number of residential gardens.

③ **Steel piling features**
Primarily used in construction and civil engineering as retaining walls, steel piling was repurposed as boundary walls in our Chelsea 2021 garden. Re-using existing steel rather than commissioning new is a way to accommodate the high-carbon impact of its original production and embrace its robust, long-lasting qualities. Flaking rust was rubbed off and a wax applied to give it a leathery finish.

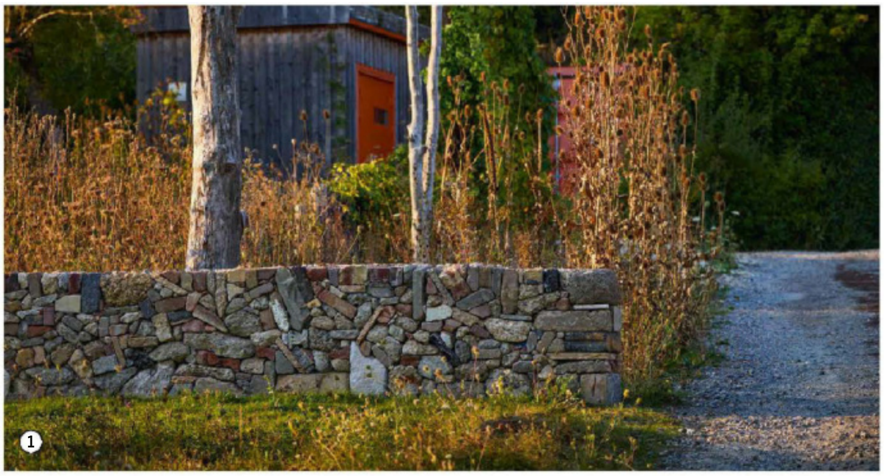
④ **Handmade herringbone**
Local Works Studio and Sarah Price collaborated with the community in the London suburb of Erith to make bricks from local waste clay for the garden at The Exchange.

⑤ **Invertebrate panels**
Ula Maria's invertebrate-friendly bungaroosh wall for her RHS Chelsea 2024 Best in Show garden demonstrated thoughtful composition of reclaimed materials, leaving a variety of crevices and spaces for other garden inhabitants to find safety in.

⑥ **Dead wood details**
Leaving a dead tree standing in your garden provides habitat for wildlife and builds soil health. At Gothenburg Botanical Garden, the British artist Stuart Ian Frost has artfully transformed a dead tree into a piece entitled *Haven* with a pattern of holes drilled into it, creating shelter for invertebrates.

⑦ **Brush bundles**
At the Horniman Museum in London, head of horticulture Errol Reuben Fernandes creates sculptural habitat bundles. Senesced and lignified plants are gathered and tied to sweet chestnut posts to stand, protecting overwintering invertebrates who may be sheltering or laying eggs in the hollow stems and seedheads.

⑧ **Coloured rocks**
Darryl Moore has made a number of innovative pocket parks and green alleys for Team London Bridge. Here, locally found, waste building materials originally destined for landfill were repurposed, and the simple act of painting concrete lumps brings colour, connection and playful energy.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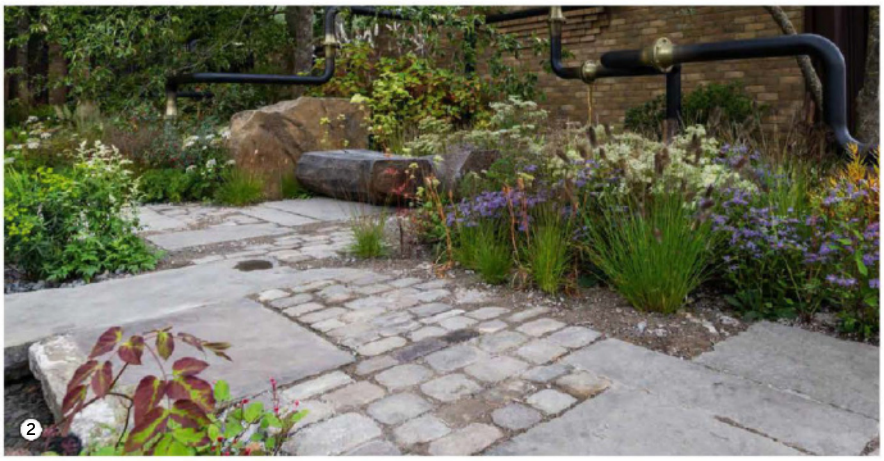
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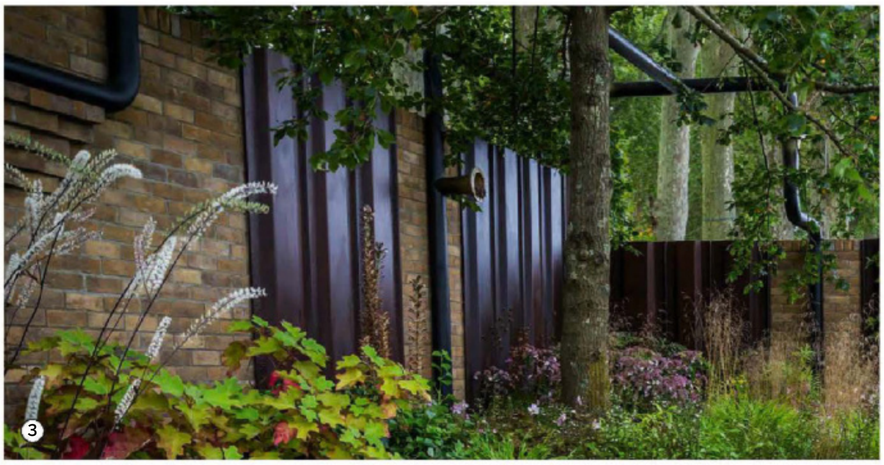
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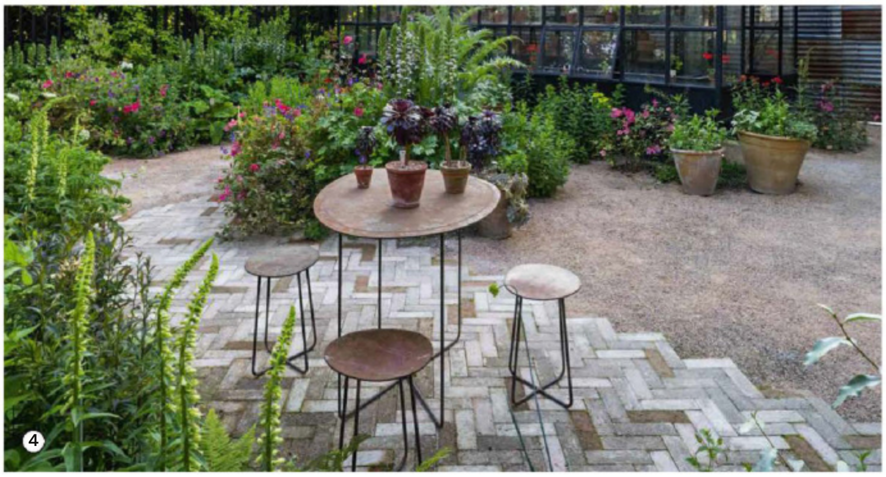
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1 ALISTER THORPE, 2&3 HBS, 4 RICHARD BLOOM

5

Sourcing pre-loved materials can yield wonderful results. Local reclamation yards and platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree feature reclaimed treasures

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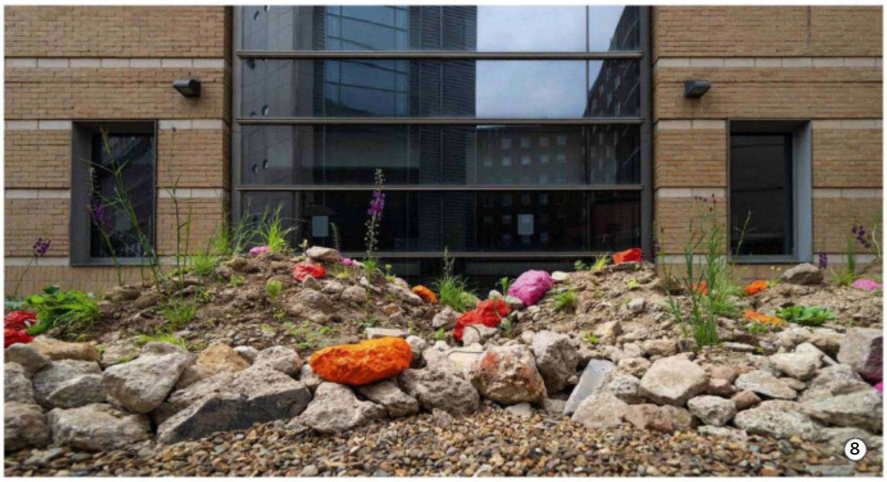

8

5 NEIL HEPWORTH / RHS, 6 STUART IAN FROST, 7 ERROL FERNANDES, 8 MICKEY LEE

▷ sending them to landfill, we're repurposing them as thick mulches and habitat piles, creating a new, plant-led landscape. By the end of the project, we'll have planted 25 per cent of this once-industrial site with phytoremediation species and prevented hundreds of tonnes of waste from entering landfill, while fostering a green haven for people and wildlife.

Waste materials are full of opportunity. If you have some left on site – perhaps from a building being demolished – it's an easy win to use that waste to fill gabion wire baskets, or to crush it into gravel for mulching planting, or, inspired by designer Darryl Moore, painting chunks of concrete in bright colours.

Local Works Studio and Sarah Price collaborated with the community in Erith, London, to develop bricks from local clay for the garden at The Exchange. We may not all have the time to make our own bricks, but sourcing locally and, ideally, pre-loved materials, can yield wonderful results. Local reclamation yards and even platforms such as Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree feature lots of reclaimed treasures.

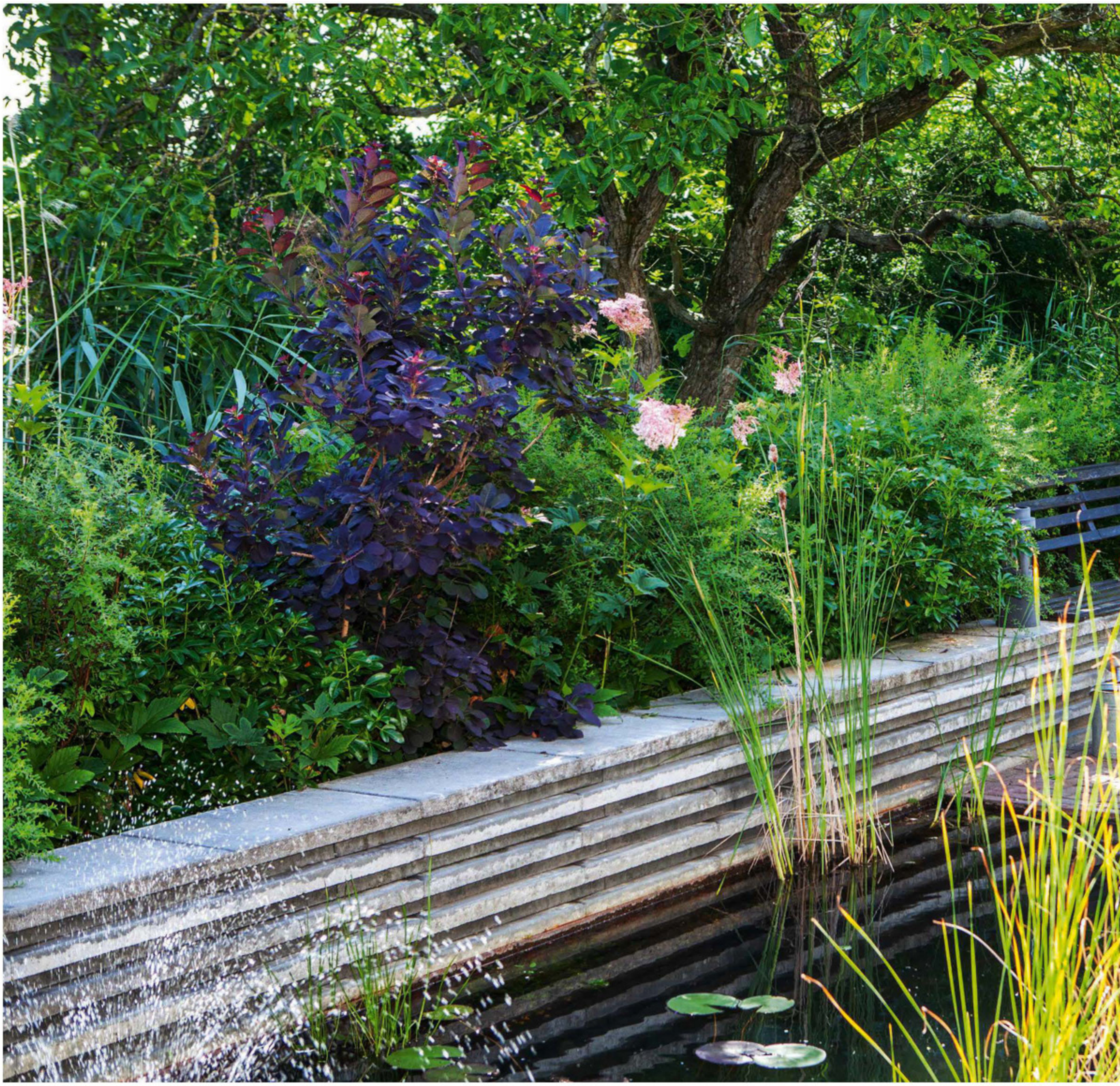
New ways to build

The way we build our gardens matters just as much as what we put in them. Our soil is a living system teeming with organisms, and it plays a crucial role in plant health, water retention and nutrient cycling. Protecting that as you make any element of the garden is crucial. Avoid people or machinery moving on it in wet weather, and always use boards or track mats.

Innovations in low-carbon construction materials, such as cement-free concrete, can significantly reduce emissions. When we developed a permeable terrazzo paving for our RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden in 2023, the environmental savings of the green concrete we used were equivalent to 14 return flights from London to Barcelona, for just 60 square metres.

Screw piles or ground screws are a low-impact alternative to concrete foundations, minimising soil disturbance while supporting garden structures such as decks, boardwalks and small buildings. And manufacturers and researchers such as Front Sustainable Building Materials and Kenoteq are increasingly developing lower-embodied carbon versions of a traditional clay brick from waste materials.

As with any garden, art and sculpture can be a rich source of inspiration. My wife Catriona and I, for example, have spent the past three years gradually ▷



CASE STUDY

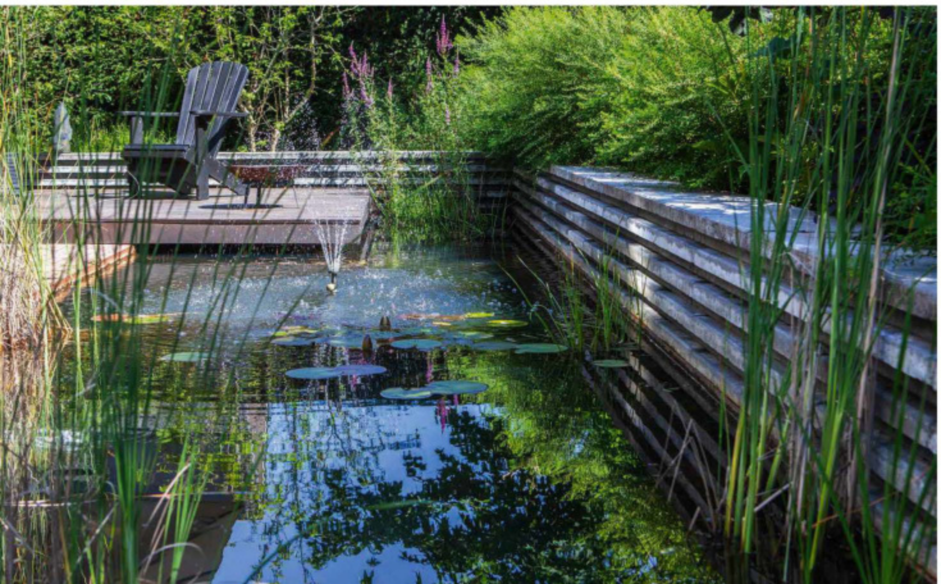
In this garden by Dutch design firm Studio Toop, repurposed concrete pavers have been given a new lease of life as a low wall

I'm a great admirer of the work of the Dutch-American garden designer Carrie Preston, founder of Studio Toop. She combines inventive use of materials, meticulous attention to detail and rich, resilient planting. I love her Instagram (@studiotoop), where with great generosity she shares her approach to design, full of ingenious details I wish I'd thought of. We share the same view of the creatively invigorating power of limitations – using what you have to determine what you're making.

In this private garden, the low walls are made from repurposed concrete terrace pavers. Rather than disposing of these in landfill, Carrie saw the design opportunity in them. These standard 400mm x 600mm pavers have been stacked to form the low walls in the garden at the thoughtful height of 450mm – ideal for seating. So, not only do they define the garden's structure, but also offer wide perching choices.

A decent foundation and specialist glue fixing between the stacks gives stability. Look closely and you'll notice that alternating rows are slightly set in, resulting in a stylish and considered shadow gap.

Natural materials offer endless possibilities. British artist Stuart Ian Frost transforms dead trees into stunning sculptures and refuges for solitary bees and other invertebrates



JOLANTHE LALKENS PHOTOGRAPHY

▷ building dead hedges in our garden in Scotland. These hedges of brash, stuffed with cut bracken, act as gentle boundaries, windbreaks and even screening for an unsightly tank, while simultaneously sequestering carbon by returning organic matter to the soil and providing vital wildlife corridors.

One of the newer hedges near a window became home to a wren earlier this spring, and we watched her with joy flit in and out of her nest. This year, inspired by award-winning artist, friend and studio collaborator Laura Ellen Bacon's incredible woven sculptures, we began weaving finer and more flexible spriggy ends of birch branches into the hedge structure, giving it an undulating, wave-like form.

Natural materials offer endless possibilities. At Gothenburg Botanical Garden, where our studio is designing a sequence of major new botanical spaces, British artist Stuart Ian Frost has transformed a dead tree into an insect haven by drilling various sized holes into it – creating both a stunning sculpture and a refuge for solitary bees and other invertebrates. Remember to use a variety of drill bit sizes and consider a range of horizontal and slightly angled holes, in both sunny and shady spots, to mimic natural habitats and invertebrate preferences. After drilling, remove any of the debris clogging the hole.

Taking it a step further, a stumpery can transform a shady garden into a sculptural space that supports a rich ecosystem. Old stumps, logs, bark pieces and branches come together to form a woodland 'rockery,' creating the perfect environment for ferns, fungi, frogs, stag beetles and more to thrive.

Earlier this year, our studio volunteered at the Horniman Museum on the Grasslands Garden perennial cutback. Head of horticulture Errol Reuben Fernandes had us all starry eyed about his sculptural habitat bundles, with the senesced and lignified plants gathered up and tied to sweet chestnut posts to stand, protecting the overwintering invertebrates that may be sheltering or laying eggs in the hollow stems and seedheads.

You may not have posts of sweet chestnut to hand, but a simple teepee structure of a few canes or hazel poles, tied at the top and filled inside with layers of cut-back plants and other organic matter, is an easy way to provide nesting and retreat in the smallest of spaces. These natural obelisks can be repeated throughout a garden to bring structure, connection and function to a space. ◻

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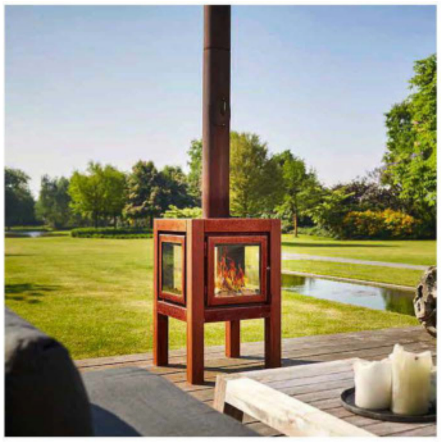

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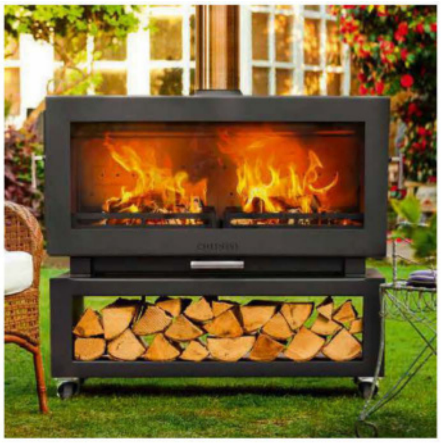
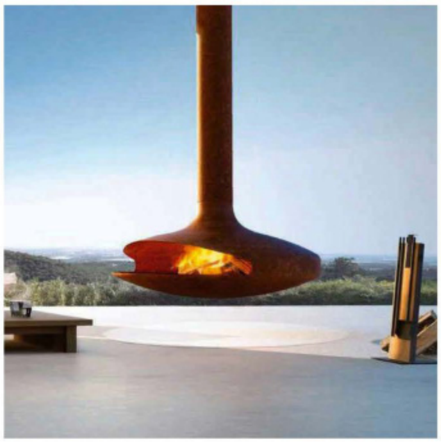
Rb73 Quaruba L Stationary Log Burner,
from £1,415, Parker & Coop,
01932 850140, parkerandcoop.com



WIDESCREEN
Clean Burn XL Outdoor Wood Burner,
£4,749, Chesneys,
020 7627 1410, chesneys.co.uk



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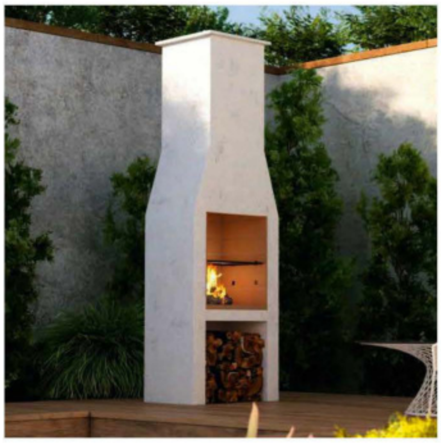
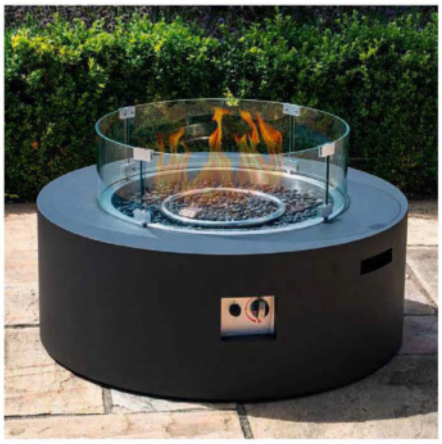
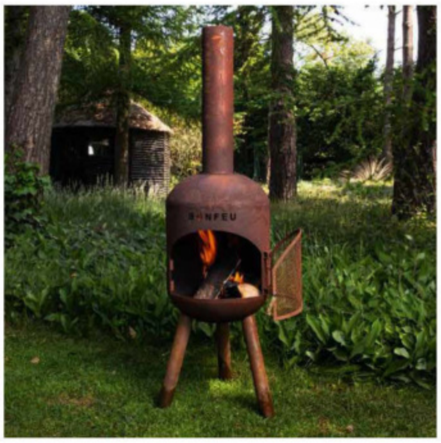


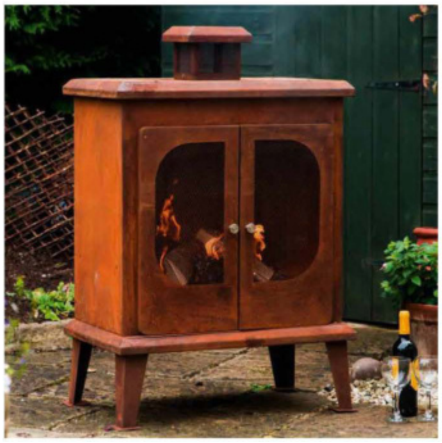
CHIMNEY
Isokern 500 Garden Fireplace,
£899, Schiedel,
0191 416 1150, shop.schiedel.com



IN THE ROUND
Round Gas Fire Pit Coffee Table, charcoal,
£649, Maze Living,
01440 710673, mazeliving.co.uk



RETRO
Bonfeu BonSolo Outdoor Fireplace,
£139, StovesAreUs,
01484 940111, stovesareus.co.uk



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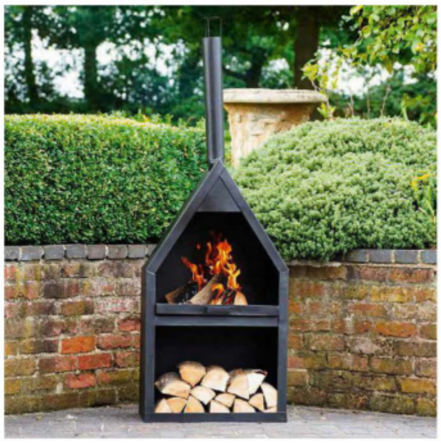
Wakehurst Wood Burner Fire Place,
£191.99, Gardenesque,
01276 535641, gardenesque.com



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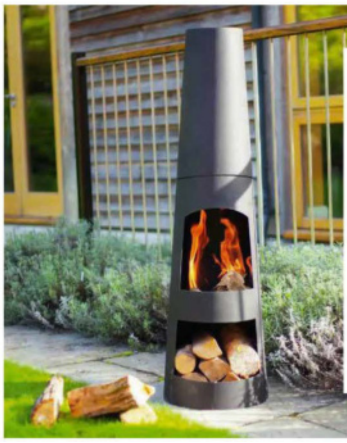
07938 073354, myitalianliving.com



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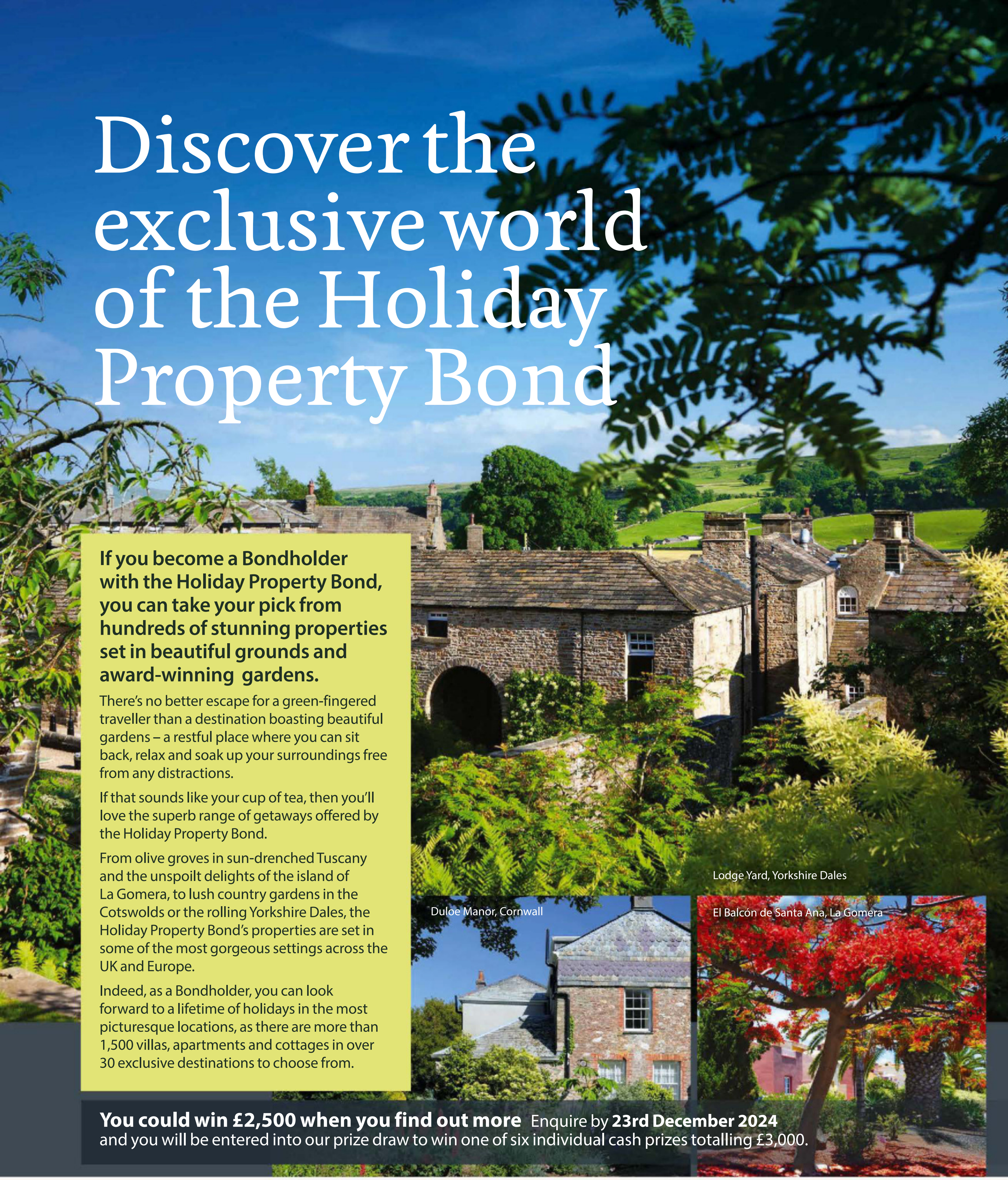
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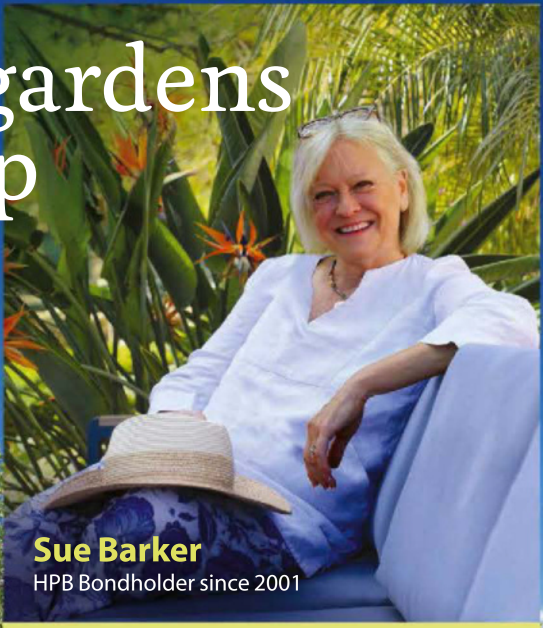

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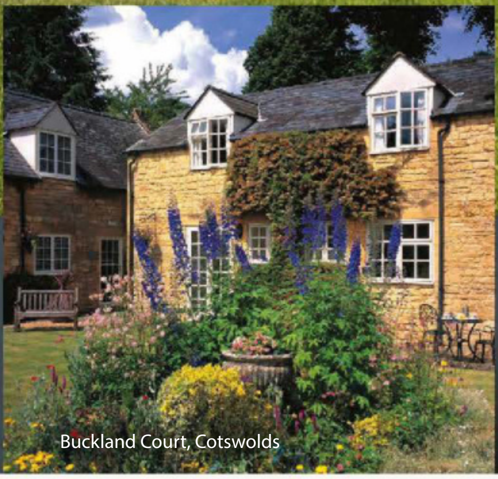

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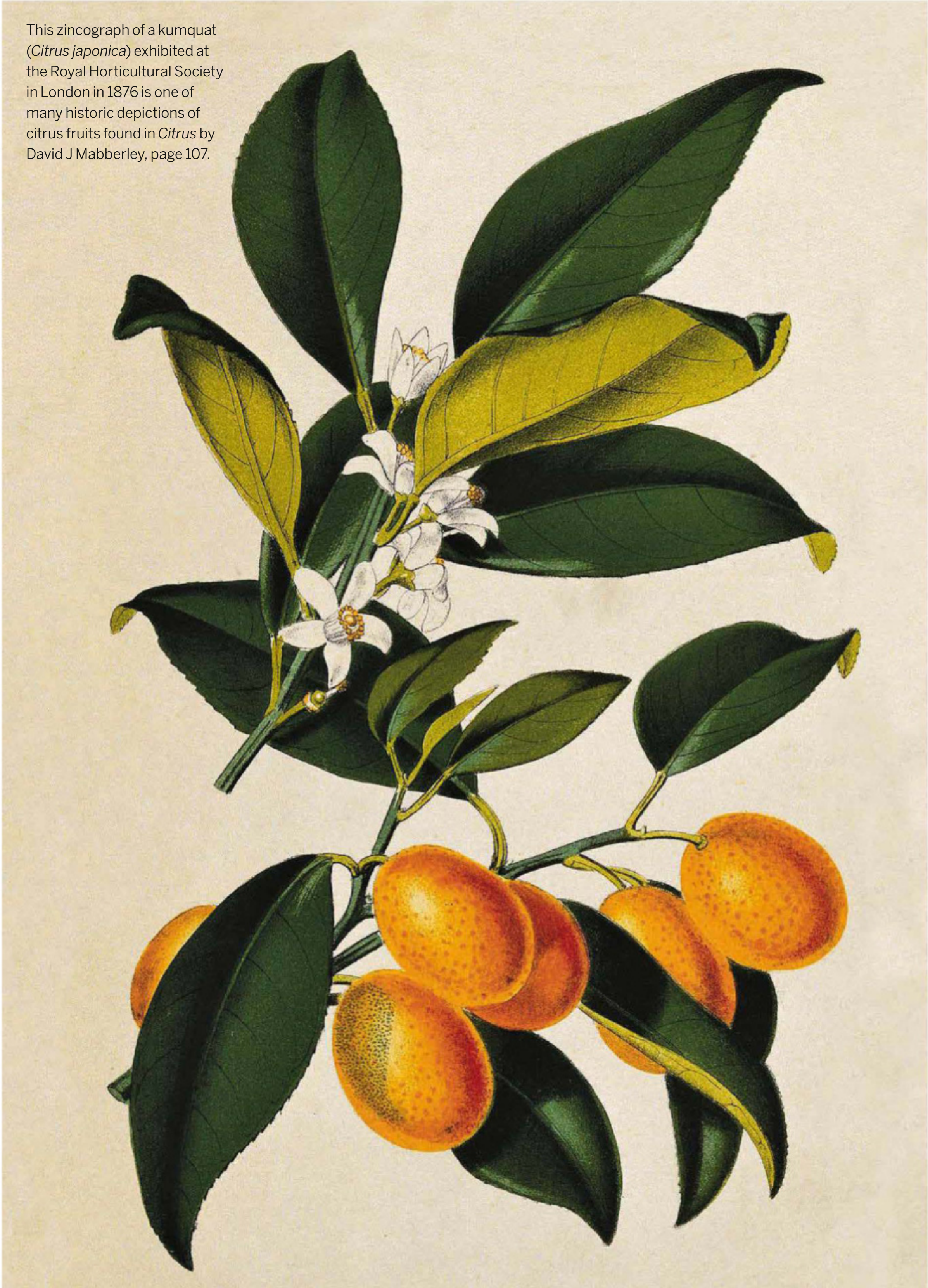
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, Q&A, the crossword and the big idea



This zincograph of a kumquat (*Citrus japonica*) exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society in London in 1876 is one of many historic depictions of citrus fruits found in *Citrus* by David J Mabberley, page 107.

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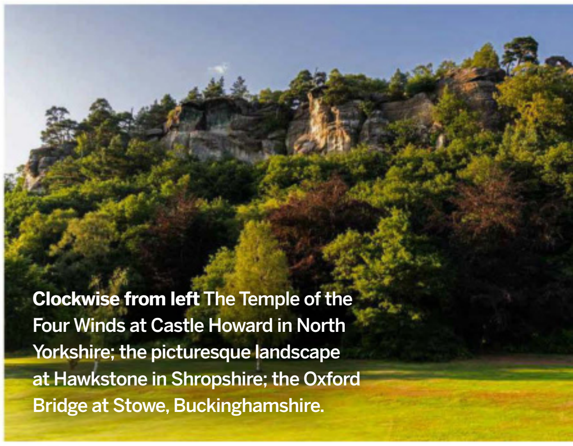
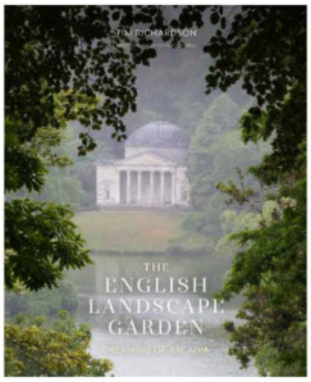


Clockwise from left The Temple of the Four Winds at Castle Howard in North Yorkshire; the picturesque landscape at Hawkstone in Shropshire; the Oxford Bridge at Stowe, Buckinghamshire.

FIELDS OF DREAMS

Is there anything new we can learn from Tim Richardson's guided tour of some quintessentially English (and one Welsh) landscape gardens, asks **Stephen Parker**



THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN: DREAMING OF ARCADIA
by Tim Richardson
Frances Lincoln, £40
ISBN 978-0711290921

This sumptuous book claims to be the 'first ever large-format book to be published on the topic of the 18th-century landscape garden' – but is there anything new to say about this quintessentially British creation, with rolling hills, forest clumps, mirror-flat lakes, grazing Longhorn cows and eye-catching monoliths and temples, so typically created by 'Capability' Brown and William Kent?

Author Tim Richardson takes us on a tour of 20 of the finest surviving examples and there is inevitably a longer list of gardens that have been excluded. Initially this is worrying, but it turns out to be one of the strengths of the book: Richardson has time and space to focus upon each landscape, its narrative and the ambitious landowners' original intentions. It is in this that Richardson excels.

In the chosen 20 are several of the greats: Stowe, Chiswick House, Petworth and, of course, Wrest Park and Rousham. The selection continues with the beautiful Castle Hill and the very royally connected green sanctuary that is St Paul's Walden Bury. Then we have the magnificent Blenheim Palace, named after the 1704 Battle of Blenheim. Richardson reintroduces us to what he argues was the intention of the architect Sir John Vanbrugh's original landscape: to evoke the plan of the battlefield at Blenheim, with the alignments of 'soldiers' in battalions of trees and a 'triumphant' five-storey bridge 'suitable for a glorious and victorious entry to a city.' The landscape was largely swept away by 'Capability' Brown, who softened the alignment of the trees and made the bridge (subsequently regarded as a carbuncle) less dominant and more appealing by submerging much of it in a lake.

Stourhead is seen by Richardson as a joyous landscape, which runs contrary to the received perception of it being a 'landscape of loss,' a sad memorial to owner Henry Hoare's many lost family members and filled with Whiggish solemnity. He also disputes further the oft-accepted notion of it being a narrative from landscape artist Claude's oil painting of Aeneas at Delos – a painting that was not even available to view when Henry Hoare was creating Stourhead.

However, it is at the utterly scandalous West Wycombe Park created by the

CLIVE BOURSNELL

> Hawkstone Park is designed to elicit a thrill of fear in visitors as they traverse rocky precipices and encounter live hermits

dilettante Sir Francis Dashwood that Richardson really gets excited, for Dashwood is a man he clearly admires. He gives the largest section to the landscape that has been so often dismissed as having mere humorous and frivolous effects, packed with innuendo. Richardson gets into Dashwood's mindset and appreciates the garden as a riposte to the hypocrisy and self aggrandisement of the time. One of the highlights of the book.

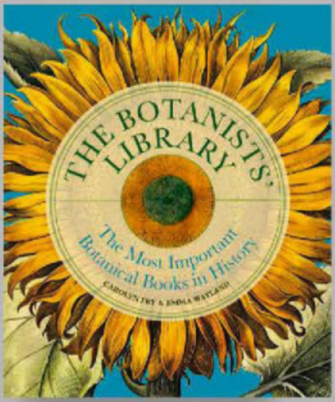
We head north to Studley Royal, a dreamy and utterly immaculate valley garden that culminates with a view down and across the ruins of a Cistercian abbey. Here Richardson enthuses that this is 'perhaps the most transcendentally beautiful landscape garden of all. The one that most nearly conjures a vision of Arcadia or the Elysian fields.' And where John Aislabie had sought refuge after being accused of financial misdemeanours by his fellow Whig government colleagues. He created the most elegant riposte imaginable: a grandly original landscape garden that came to be regarded as better than anyone else's.

The book ends with the three Picturesque Hs (or as Richardson describes them 'the homegrown, budget version of the Grand Tour, particularly appealing to women'): Hackfall, Hawkstone and the sublime Hafod. Richardson takes us through each of them energetically, revealing how Hawkstone Park, as is common to all three, is designed to elicit a thrill of fear in visitors as they traverse rocky precipices and encounter live hermits.

The English Landscape Garden: Dreaming of Arcadia has reignited my imagination, my interest and passion for the gardens of the 18th century and I am sure it will do the same for you. In answer to that initial question: there was definitely more to say on the English landscape garden, and this book is a welcome addition to any garden history library. ◻

Reviewer **Stephen Parker** is a garden historian, lecturer, author and design curator.

Recommended reads this month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THE BOTANISTS' LIBRARY: THE MOST IMPORTANT BOTANICAL BOOKS IN HISTORY
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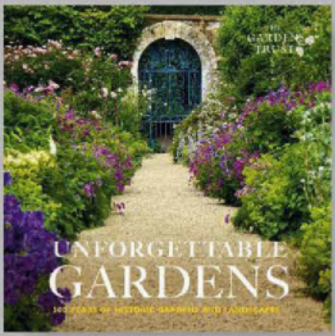
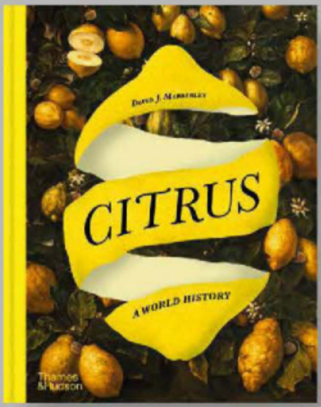
ISBN 978-0711294943
Traces the development of botanical publications from Theophrastus's *Historia Plantarum*, through the herbals of the 16th century, and works of 18th- and 19th-century plant hunters, to more recent botanical reference tomes.



UNFORGETTABLE GARDENS: 500 YEARS OF HISTORIC GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES
The Gardens Trust
Batsford, £30,
ISBN 978-1849949033
Arranged chronologically, the book charts an overview of British garden design from the 1500s to the 21st century, with text from leading garden historians and conservators.



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by David J Mabberley
Thames & Hudson, £35,
ISBN 978-0500026366
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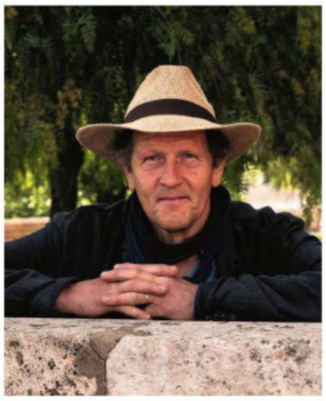

DERRY MOORE

'One of the great pleasures of gardens is the variety'

TV gardener and author Monty Don talks about his new book, what he's reading, and what he's up to next

What's your book about? It's connected to the TV series, *Monty Don's Spanish Gardens*. Spain was somewhere that I didn't know terribly well and I certainly didn't know the gardens well. I had the great privilege of being able to film the series and write about it at the same time. The root of my books is not to tell people what I already know, it's to share what I find out.

What did you learn from writing it? About the incredible diversity of Spain itself and the incredible diversity of gardens and gardening.

Is there one idea that you'd like to share from the book? From a horticultural point of view, it's accepting, adapting and dealing with the conditions you're given. We completely underestimate in this country how privileged we are in terms of climate and soil and general horticulture conditions. Many years ago, I interviewed Fernando Caruncho, and he said, slightly playfully, that no garden needs more than seven plants. And obviously that's not something to be taken literally, but the principle is good. I think that's a very Spanish thing that you have to use a very limited palette of plants that look good, grow well and are healthy, and that makes you more creative.

What books are on your night stand right now? I've just finished a book by Patrick Joyce called *Remembering Peasants*, which is rather wonderful, about the whole culture of peasants in Ireland and Eastern Europe.

What first sparked your interest in gardening? I grew up in a house with four or five acres of gardens, and my brothers and I gardened from a very early age. We were given jobs – mowing the lawn, weeding the strawberries, sieving compost or potting up chrysanths. By the time I was about 16 or 17, I was running the vegetable garden and knew what to do. I had learned in the same way that I could chop wood and pluck a chicken. And then I discovered that I loved it. And I mean that, not as a kind of false modesty or anything. I mean it literally– I garden for love.

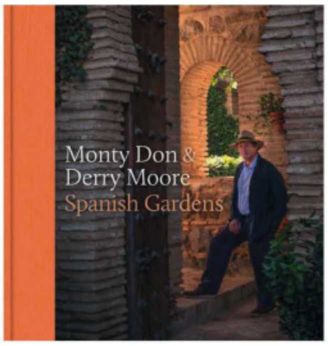
Do you have a favourite garden or landscape to visit? I don't have favourites, but, I really love Rousham – it's almost perfect. It has a kind of purity about it, its history, its proportions, deceptive simplicity, Englishness. It's a marvel. But to me, it's like saying, what's your favourite apple? One of the great pleasures of gardens is the variety.

Can you share a mistake or failure that you've made? So many; where to begin? Because the garden I have now was made from a field 33 years ago, I planted far too many trees and hedges close together. This was a very open, windblown site, but now that they've grown, the ventilation is very poor, so there are all kinds of fungal problems. Also, every single year I am late ordering seed or plants or bulbs. Invariably there are some varieties I can't get because they've all sold out.

What is in the pipeline? I've just finished filming a five-part series on Great British gardens. It's actually been one of the hardest things I've done because it goes back to what I was saying about Spain. If the great lesson there was of the diversity of all the conditions, the difficulty of a British garden is that it's homogeneous. All British gardens share similar characteristics. That's partly to do with our climate, partly to do with the fact we have a certain style and we can grow so many plants. There's barely a good British garden, from Knepp to Wollerton Old Hall, that isn't full of all kinds of perennials. When you start looking at them, as I've done over the past 12 months, there's a lot of similarity. To craft a five-hour narrative was a bit more tricky. But I think we've done it, and it's been fascinating.

Anything else coming up? I'm filming for *Gardeners' World* and I'm doing a talks tour in November – I'm doing 26 dates all around the country. I've got the British gardens book to write and various other projects. There's a lot on, let alone gardening.

GI To read a longer version of this interview head to **gardensillustrated.com/monty-books**



SPANISH GARDENS
by Monty Don and Derry Moore
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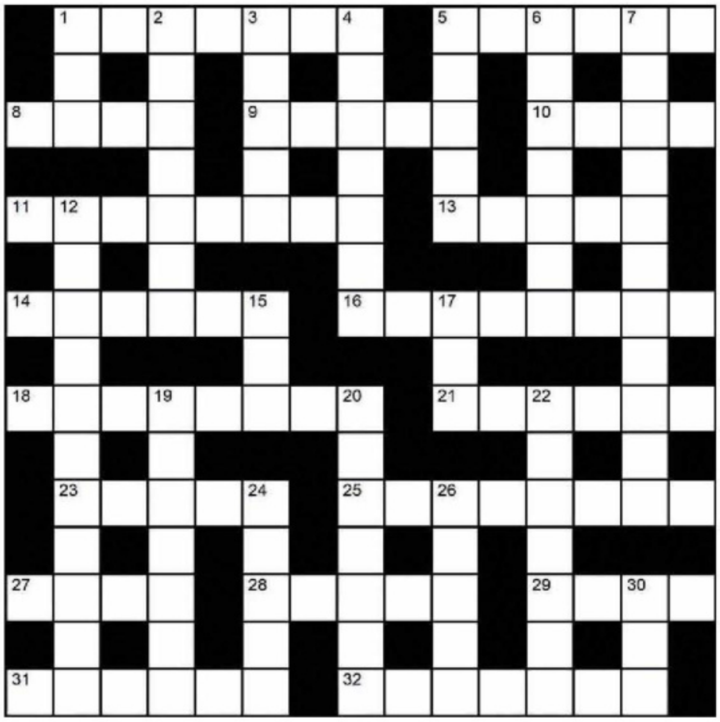
Crossword



ACROSS
1 Genus of love-in-a-mist plant (7)
5 Common name of *Armeria* plants – economy? (6)
8 A compact clematis with large purple flowers – some flowered daily (4)
9 An ornamental onion flower is __-shaped (5)
10 *Garrya elliptica*'s common name is __ tassel bush (4)
11 Genus of ornamental grasses aka eg canary grass – sort of April ash (8)
13 Use a broom – but not the *Cytisus* type! (5)
14 Garden tools and suit (6)
16 *Tillandsia*'s common name; it needs neither pot nor soil (3,5)
18 Bright-yellow, double floribunda rose – possibly is rare, OK? (8)
21 Blue-leafed hosta with creamy centre – last up, maybe (2,4)
23 Tree secretion … from sycamore's inflorescence (5)
25 Plant family of dittany and choisya – a tea cure, possibly (8)
27 See 30 down
28 Genus of periwinkles (5)
29 A dwarf, white-flowering narcissus Ron's removed from Toronto! (4)
31 A species of lacecap hydrangea – mixed *Spiraea* lacks one (6)
32 A novice gardener, for instance (7)

DOWN
1 As fritillary heads are inclined to do? (3)
2 Contorted like Harry Lauder's walking stick (7)
3 It could be the death of slugs, being unusually large? (5)
4 Genus of lemon verbena – produces a oil, say (7)
5 Ashes, for instance, found in an arboretum (5)
6 20th-century lupin breeder George – and his terrier, Jack? (7)
7 Genus of meadowsweet and dropwort – version of a field lupin (11)
12 Genus of yellow-flowering horseshoe vetch – alternatively, rich poppies (11)
15 In short, a charity for which private gardens open north of the border (3)
17 Its public gardens include Rosemoor and Bridgewater (3)
19 Eg a houseleek's tightly packed leaf cluster (7)
20 Sadly ruin AI with a … genus of alyssum-like plants (7)
22 Term applied to eg petunias with petals edged in contrasting colour (7)
24 Species name meaning 'snow' or 'snowy' eg *Luzula*___ … Evian mixture (5)
26 A lacecap hydrangea with purplish autumn foliage – coronet (5)
30/27 Fungal disease of acers – to parts, anyhow! (3,4)

• Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the December issue

SOLUTIONS TO OCTOBER CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Hosta **4** Soapwort **8** Cruentus **9** Bleeds **10** Fall **11** Rings **12** Itea **13** Ochracea **16** Big Sky **17** Alatus **19** Cinnabar **21** Snip **22** Genus **24** Mops **26** Rugosa **27** Imperata **28** Galtonia **29** Lean-to.

DOWN 1 Hirta **2** Stellar **3** Aster **4** Susanna **5** Albus **6** Weeping **7** Rudbeckia **14** Calendula **15** Cos **16** Bin **18** Taproot **19** Candida **20** Armeria **22** Grain **23** Sepal **25** Petit.

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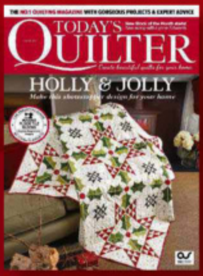

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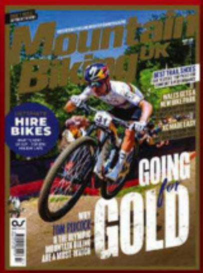

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GARDENS
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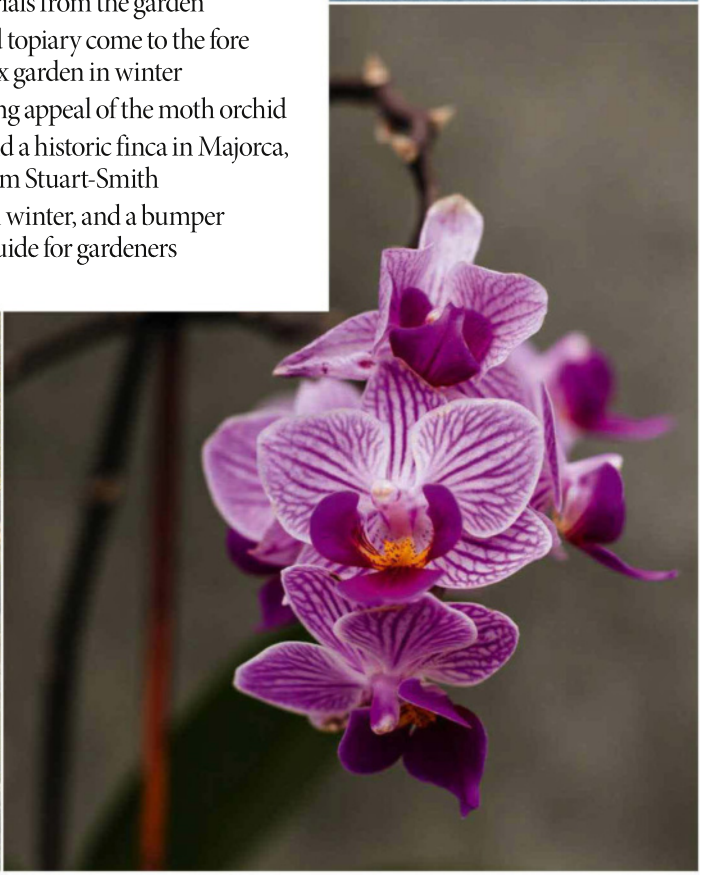
- Crisp lines and clipped topiary come to the fore in a frosted Sussex garden in winter
- Winter colour: the enduring appeal of the moth orchid
- An uplifting garden around a historic finca in Majorca, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith

PLUS Sissinghurst in winter, and a bumper Christmas gift guide for gardeners



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LEAVE WELL ALONE?

Gardeners mean well, but the act of gardening can be a hindrance to increasing biodiversity. Maybe, says **Rebecca McMackin**, we need to let leaves be

ILLUSTRATION ROSANNA MORRIS

Piet Oudolf once told me: "Americans like to display their mulch." He's not wrong, sadly.

Mulch is part of our garden aesthetic. Is it a lack of imagination? A nefarious scheme to lower the required training of landscape staff? Whatever the reason, I'm so grateful it's changing.

Gardeners all over the world are developing strategies to encourage biodiversity in our landscapes. The rewilding movement is spreading and naturalistic gardens are seeding in everywhere. But even people who prefer more formal or floral gardens can incorporate practices that invite in wildlife. A big part of that work starts with mulch, leaves and soil.

The very top of the ground, where leaf litter breaks down into humus, is an incredibly rich ecological zone that gardeners often unknowingly remove. That zone, the 'duff layer' in ecological parlance, is necessary habitat for many of the animals we love, as well as one of the main techniques that plants use to create the soils they want to live in.

Gardeners like to garden. But wildlife tends to thrive in areas we leave alone

In autumn, when tree leaves fall to the ground, they aren't being thrown away. Trees are carefully placing those leaves over their root systems where they insulate the soil and hold in moisture. Worms will pull leaves deep into the ground where carbon is sequestered. Fungi and bacteria will break them down until micronutrients are cycled back into plant-available forms. As leaves, twigs and other plant materials biodegrade, they create the soils that those trees prefer. It's terraforming. Some gardeners have it backwards: we're not making soil for plants – the plants are making it for themselves.

Many animals have come to rely on that duff layer. Bumblebees will overwinter just underneath those leaves, in the soft soils of northern slopes. Many moths and even a few butterflies spend part of their lives in the leaf litter, sometimes as eggs, sometimes as caterpillars, but most often they fall down from trees, descending on silk threads, into the leaves to pupate into adulthood. If you have an oak, there's a solid chance you also host purple hairstreak butterflies, who spin their cocoons under fallen oak leaves. The charming pink of the elephant hawk moth emerges from a dull brown pupa, camouflaged to blend in with the leaves they hide out in.

Insects such as beetles and woodlice who play critical roles in larger food webs often rely on the structural complexity of that leaf layer to hunt and hide. When we make more habitat for insects, we invite the birds who rely on them into the garden as well.

When you rake that away, you've raked away a bunch of animals. And for what? To compost the leaves, then replace them as mulch? Why not leave them alone?

In the USA, there's a popular movement to 'leave the leaves'. They're literally called leaves – we should leave them. Of course, leaving leaves can look a bit wild, perhaps unkempt. In more formal environments, there are strategies to give a clean look. Often, we remove the first foot or two of duff along the front of a garden bed, and make a clean line of mulch. These 'cues to care' make a garden look tidy and let people know they're intentionally naturalistic. Keep a clean edge, and you can get away with benign neglect in the rest. We call it the 'garden mullet.'

None of this is to say you should let leaves smother your lawns. Leaves on lawns can be mulched in with a mower. Thicker leaves, or those that fall in massive amounts can be thinned and moved around the landscape. Some of our common garden plants will grow happily through leaves, while others will faint dead away if four leaves get near them. There's a bit of a learning curve, but it's worth it. These practices are becoming more important as we watch insects disappear and bird populations decline. The more our gardens mimic the natural environments these plants and animals evolved to inhabit, the better we can co-exist.

Gardeners like to garden. But wildlife tends to thrive in areas we leave alone. Often the biggest hindrance to biodiversity is we well-meaning gardeners. But we don't have to be. Like plants, we can grow and adapt. We can learn to accept a bit of wildness.

Many of the strategies we hear of to address climate change and biodiversity decline require action – this one requires you not to act. Maybe sit in your garden and have a glass of wine. Watch the sun set. And get to know the animals who share your land with you. □

- Rebecca McMackin is an ecological horticulturist based in New York.

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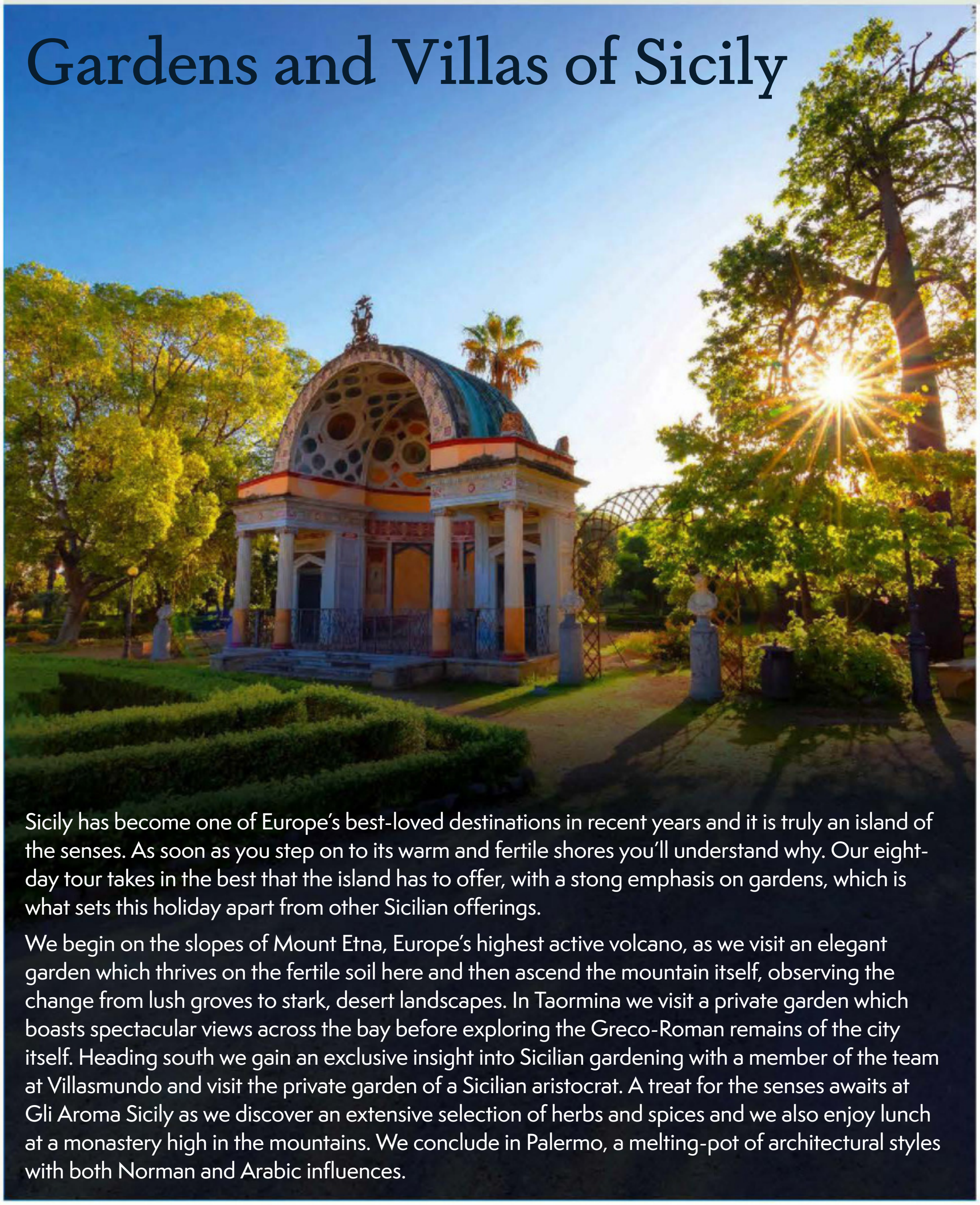

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